RETICENCE IN LITERATURE

And Other Papers

V (RK)

By

ARTHUR WAUGH

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Published February, 1915

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I OWE thanks to various editors and publishers for kind permission to reprint the contents of this volume. "Reticence in Literature" appeared in "The Yellow Book," and is reprinted by permission of Mr. John Lane. The paper on George Herbert was written as an introduction to Herbert's Poems in "The World's Classics" and "Standard Authors," and reappears by leave of Mr. Humphrey Milford. The article on George Gissing is reprinted by permission of the editor of "The Fortnightly Review"; and the other papers in the book owe the same courtesy to the editors and proprietors of "The Academy," with which "Literature" (their first home) is now incorporated, and of "The Daily Chronicle." One or two essays, which were clearly "dated" by their subject and occasion, I have left as they originally appeared. Others have undergone some revision, in view of their relation to the rest of the book, or to later changes in the author's judgment. The "Sketches for Portraits" have been selected from a quantity of similar material, as illustrating in succession various familiar phases of the literary life. Few careers make a more arduous demand upon the character; for few are subject to such sudden vacillations of success and failure, of ambition and disappointment. It is hoped that these "partial portraits" may serve to suggest, not only their separate varieties of the literary temperament, but also that sustaining brotherhood of hope and endurance, which unites all those who strive to rule their life by ideas rather than by acquisitions.

To

ALEC RABAN WAUGH

My Dear Boy :

In days before you were born, and in the years immediately following, when you were as yet too young to care about the paternal "paper and print," your Mother and I kept a scrap-book, in which she used to paste my contributions to the fugitive press. We had less to think about then, and the collection of these stray papers amused us ; but by the time when you began to act "Hamlet" and "Julius Cæsar" in the nursery, we found the interest in your activities much more absorbing than my own. So the scrap-book languished, though it still survived in oblivion ; and you will not, perhaps, have forgotten that one evening last holidays, when you were hunting in the book-room for a lost number of "Wisden's Almanack," you suddenly came across the old faded pages, full of your father's columns and half-columns, and (to their author's extreme surprise) went on reading in them till long after your usual bed-time. And you finished your evening's holiday-task by asking whether some of the stuff was not worth collecting into a book for others to re-read beside yourself. Frankly, I did not think the experiment worth while then ; and I am afraid I cannot persuade myself that it has proved so now. But in the meanwhile another friend has come along, with business opportunities, who is rash enough to share your filial confidence ; and here, in short, is a little volume, gathered out of the contents of the old

scrap-book which your Mother and I began to make before you were here to absorb so much of our life and our ambition. Will you accept it with my love, since your imagination was the first to see the book as a faint possibility?

Alas! I am afraid that your suggestion has only added one more to the books which all the world could do without. Even for yourself, I doubt if its use will extend beyond the provision of a few phrases (which you are very much at liberty to steal, and I am sure no master will detect the theft) to serve as padding for your school essays. And yet I should like to think that a word here and there may recall to your memory some of those golden hours we have spent, trudging together over Hampstead Heath or along Sherborne slopes, talking one against the other of poetry, drama, cricket, football, and whatever other joys have made our life so pleasant and our companionship so sweet. The Sherborne days are drawing to a close now; and sometimes I know only too well that, as we go talking over old delights, your thoughts are wandering off to new fields, where cannon roar among the woods of France, and where you are already so eager, as you always were, to be up and playing your part. There I can follow you only in thought and hope and trust. But whatever lies ahead of us, the past will always remain our own. "The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts"; and among the best gifts which life has brought me have been the comradeship, the sympathy, and the unclouded devotion, which you have given with such full hands to your equally devoted Father,

ARTHUR WAUGH

New Year, 1915.

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INTRODUCTION

IN a collection of papers, covering twenty-five years of journalistic "dust and desk-work," it would be vain, perhaps, to expect much unity of purpose; but their author may be permitted his own regret that work, which has entailed so many hours of penmanship, should fail to display a greater sense of progress, or a more confident air of achievement. It is not unlikely, however, that most men, who are on the verge of their fiftieth year, would have to confess already, in looking back, that they set out upon their journey with many bright expectations which were never destined to be realised. And this must be particularly true of the journalist, who is apt to begin life with the spirit of a crusade in his heart, ready to tilt at every windmill, and to seize upon any "impossible loyalty" that offers itself as his adopted cause. The heart of youth beats high; the white road beckons to adventure; a dragon lurks behind every hill. It is only as the twilight settles down in earnest that we realise how many of our suspected foemen were only shadows after all.

The young writer, however, soon gives up struggling against his world, and learns to march in time with its monotonous movement. Editors, he comes to understand, are not in the least interested in personal prejudices; and those chivalrous journals which set out to combat abuses cease very shortly to appear at all. For the world expects its prophets to prophesy smooth things,

and by very stress of necessity the task of current criticism begins to fade, in a year or two, into the kindlier tribute of appreciation. The result, perhaps, is not stimulating to progress, but it is unquestionably mellowing to the temperament. And the truth remains, that in the long run we learn more from what we love than from what we dislike.

The few papers in this little volume which evince anything of a combative disposition were written when the writer was very new to his business ; and, if they have any quality at all, it is chiefly the youthful quality of freshness or of enthusiasm. The new movement in literature is always challenged, and the challenge does not invariably come from the middle-aged and hidebound. Youth is naturally much more intolerant than maturity. But by the time that a man has learnt to disregard the books with which he is out of sympathy, and to concentrate upon those which he can understand and appreciate, he ought to be able to strike some faint fire of companionship out of that rare reader who shares his own affections, and who possesses also the true bookman's patience, which can bear to listen to another's praise of things which he himself, perhaps, may be conscious of being able to praise to much better purpose. For such indulgent readers, if they are to be found, these gleanings of twenty-five years, spent almost entirely among books, have been collected from the old scrap-book described in the dedication. They speak very likely in phrases familiar and even conventional ; but at any rate they speak from the heart.

And such consistency as they may claim is

based upon one sincere and deep conviction. Literature, I believe, should strive not so much to describe life as to interpret it; and all Life, interpreted truly, is filled with

> "Undreamt-of possibilities
> In most unhopeful pictures."

I remember H. D. Traill saying once that, as he walked down any squalid suburban street, he could picture behind the soiled window-curtains a series of domestic tragedies as poignant and hopeless as any that have ever held the stage. Now, that was a *description* of life which represents a large angle of modern literary expression; but I very much doubt whether it is a true *interpretation* of life,—even of the sort of life that is lived in Peckham or in Kentish Town. The critic who sees squalor and misery in every grade of life, material or spiritual, that lies immediately below his own, falls inevitably short of revelation, because he is simply imputing to the world himself and his own impressions, instead of interpreting the real world and the true impressions which animate these apparently melancholy surroundings. For the melancholy is merely relative,—the contribution in fact of the spectator,—and the truly creative interpreter knows that behind every one of those smug bay-windows hope is perpetually springing anew, romance is continually blossoming, the indomitable heart of man is making for itself an eternal paradise out of a dingy back-parlour. The native imagination, which enables a child to see the features of the London express in a match-box mounted upon two cotton-reels, still survives through manhood,

making plain the rough places of life, penetrating its darkness with light; and for the fostering of that magic fancy Literature is the only certain amulet. The first quality of literature, therefore, is to be fresh, and fragrant, and illuminating, and all the literature that has outlived its own day will be found to possess that saving grace. It is a grace, moreover, which grows with years, revealing itself more and more, like some lovely and loveable character, under the influence of familiarity.

Further, what is fragrant, fresh, and illuminating, will, in the very nature of things, be also urbane; and it is here that at the present time literature is faced by its sternest difficulty. Urbanity, of course, is a characteristic of the few, and during the last twenty years the prevailing tendency of education and of politics has driven steadily towards the universal democratisation of letters. More and more space is given to books in popular newspapers, with the result that the test of literary excellence has begun to be confused with the test of popularity. What is loud, emphatic, self-assertive is bound, under such a system, to be invested with a value to which it has no sort of legitimate claim; and even eccentricity (one of the worst of literary vices) is exalted into a virtue, upon the barren excuse that it takes the public eye. But the true test of literature lies at the other extreme. Exaggeration, violence, vulgarity are its deadliest banes; reticence, modesty, and shy beauty are its infallible qualities. These are not the qualities, perhaps, that attract attention under the garish lights of the modern stage of journalism, but they are the only qualities that will stand the wearing test of daily life and spiritual

companionship. For these are the qualities which spread peace and beauty in a home; and the true function of literature is to make for every man a home of the soul, a citadel of the mind, where he may find protection against the assaults of time and fortune, and a sanctuary amid adversities. As a man grows older, he is likely to find that such a continuing city becomes more and more essential. For friends fall off, and circumstances change; but a good book is always a good book, and a favourite passage is always at its post. The man who lives among the right books is free for ever of the highest form of fellowship.

And since there are few pleasanter hours for the book-lover than those which we spend in the firelight, among the books we love, taking down volume after volume, reading a verse here and a favourite passage there, and protesting their charm to a congenial friend in the opposite chair; so, perhaps, some faint echo of such enthusiasm may linger round these faded *causeries*, recalling the ambrosial hour when for the first time the eye kindled, and the heart beat quicker, at the call of some inspired phrase, which has long since woven itself into the fabric of our life. Books make the best friends, and the friendships that grow out of books remain the most enduring. For even a harsh word, or an unkind thought, can be smiled away in the light of a cherished quotation.

VIEWS AND IMPRESSIONS

literature. Reticence is not a national characteristic—far otherwise. The phrase " national characteristic " is, I know well, a cant phrase, and, as such, full of the dangers of abuse. Historical and ethnographical criticism, proceeding on popular lines, has tried from time to time to fix certain tendencies to certain races, and to argue from individuals to generalities with a freedom that every law of induction belies. And so we have come to endow the Frenchman, universally and without exception, with politeness, the Indian, equally universally, with cunning, the American with the commercial talent, the German with the educational, and so forth. Generalisations of this kind must, of course, be accepted with limitations.

But it is not too much, perhaps, to say that the Englishman has always prided himself upon his frankness. He is always for speaking out; and it is this faculty of outspokenness that he is anxious to attribute to those characters which he sets up in the market-places of his religion and his literature, as those whom he chiefly delights to honour. The demigods of our national verse, the heroes of our national fiction, are brow-bound, above all other laurels, with this glorious freedom of free speech and open manners, and we have come to regard this broad, untrammelled virtue of ours, as all individual virtues *will* be regarded with the revolution of the cycle of provinciality, as a guerdon above question or control. We have become inclined to forget that every good thing has, as Aristotle pointed out so long ago, its corresponding evil, and that the corruption of the best is always worst of all. Frankness is so great a boon, we say: we can forgive anything to the man who

has the courage of his convictions, the fearlessness of freedom—the man, in a word, who speaks out?

But we have to distinguish, I think, at the outset between a national virtue in the rough and the artificial or acquired fashion in which we put that virtue into use. It is obvious that, though many things are possible to us, which are good in themselves, many things are inexpedient, when considered relatively to our environment. Count Tolstoi may preach his gospel of non-resistance till the beauty of his holiness seems almost Christ-like; but every man who goes forth to his work and to his labour knows that the habitual turning of the right cheek to the smiter of the left, the universal gift of the cloak to the beggar of our coat, is subversive of all political economy, and no slight incentive to immorality as well. In the same way, it will be clear, that this national virtue of ours, this wholesome, sincere outspokenness, is only possible within certain limits, set by custom and expediency, and it is probably a fact that there was never a truly wise man yet but tempered his natural freedom of speech by an acquired habit of reticence. The man who never speaks out may be morose; the man who is always speaking out is a most undesirable acquaintance.

Now, I suppose every one is prepared to admit with Matthew Arnold that the literature of an age (we are not now speaking of poetry alone, be it understood, but of literature as a whole), that this literature must, in so far as it is truly representative of, and therefore truly valuable to, the time in which it is produced, reflect and criticise the manners, tastes, development, the life, in fact,

of the age for whose service it was devised. We have, of course, critical literature probing the past: we have philosophical literature prophesying the future; but the truly representative literature of every age is the creative, which shows its people its natural face in a glass, and leaves to posterity the record of the manner of man it found. In one sense, indeed, creative literature must inevitably be critical as well, critical in that it employs the double methods of analysis and synthesis, dissecting motives and tendencies first, and then from this examination building up a type, a sample of the representative man and woman of its epoch. The truest fiction of any given century, yes, and the truest poetry, too (though the impressionist may deny it), must be a criticism of life, must reflect its surroundings. Men pass, and fashions change; but in the literature of their day their characters, their tendencies, remain crystallised for all time: and what we know of the England of Chaucer and Shakespeare, we know wholly and absolutely in the truly representative, truly creative, because truly critical literature which they have left to those that come after.

It is, then, the privilege, it is more, it is the duty of the man of letters to speak out, to be fearless, to be frank, to give no ear to the puritans of his hour, to have no care for the objections of prudery; the life that he lives is the life he must depict, if his work is to be of any lasting value. He must be frank, but he must be something more. He must remember—hourly and momently he must remember—that his virtue, step by step, inch by inch, imperceptibly melts into the vice

which stands at its pole; and that (to employ Aristotelian phraseology for the moment) there is a sort of middle point, a centre of equilibrium, to pass which is to disturb and overset the entire fabric of his labours. Midway between liberty and license, in literature as in morals, stands the pivot of good taste, the centre-point of art. The natural inclination of frankness, the inclination of the virtue in the rough, is to blunder on resolutely with an indomitable and damning sincerity, till all is said that can be said, and art is lost in photography. The inclination of frankness, restrained by and tutored to the limitations of art and beauty, is to speak so much as is in accordance with the moral idea: and then, at the point where ideas melt into mere report, mere journalistic detail, to feel intuitively the restraining, the saving influence of reticence. In every age there has been some point (its exact position has varied, it is true, but the point has always been there) at which speech stopped short; and the literature which has most faithfully reflected the manners of that age, the literature, in fine, which has survived its little hour of popularity, and has lived and is still living, has inevitably, invariably, and without exception been the literature which stayed its hand and voice at the point at which the taste of the age, the age's conception of art, set up its statue of reticence, with her finger to her lips, and the inscription about her feet: "So far shalt thou go, and no further."

We have now, it seems, arrived at one consideration, which must always limit the liberty of frankness, namely, the standard of contemporary taste. The modesty that hesitates to allign itself

with that standard is a shortcoming, the audacity that rushes beyond is a violence to the unchanging law of literature. But the single consideration is insufficient. If we are content with the criterion of contemporary taste alone, our standard of judgment becomes purely historical: we are left, so to speak, with a sliding scale which readjusts itself to every new epoch: we have no permanent and universal test to apply to the literature of different ages: in a word, comparative criticism is impossible. We feel at once that we need, besides the shifting standard of contemporary taste, some fixed unit of judgment that never varies; some foot-rule that applies with equal infallibility to the literature of early Greece and to the literature of later France; and such an unit, such a foot-rule, can only be found in the final test of all art, the necessity of the moral idea. We must, in distinguishing the thing that may be said fairly and artistically from the thing whose utterance is inadmissible, we must in such a decision control our judgment by two standards—the one, the shifting standard of contemporary taste: the other, the permanent standard of artistic justification, the presence of the moral idea. With these two elements in action, we ought, I think, to be able to estimate with tolerable fairness the amount of reticence in any age which ceases to be a shortcoming, the amount of frankness which begins to be a violence in the literature of the period. We ought, with these two elements in motion, to be able to employ a scheme of comparative criticism which will prevent us from encouraging that retarding and dangerous doctrine that what was expedient and justifiable, for instance, in

the dramatists of the Restoration is expedient and justifiable in the playwrights of our own Victorian era; we ought, too, to be able to arrive instinctively at a sense of the limits of art, and to appreciate the point at which frankness becomes a violence, in that it has degenerated into mere brawling, animated neither by purpose nor idea. Let us, then, consider these two standards of taste and art separately: and first, let us give a brief attention to the contemporary standard.

We may, I think, take it as a rough working axiom that the point of reticence in literature, judged by a contemporary standard, should be settled by the point of reticence in the conversation of the taste and culture of the age. Literature is, after all, simply the ordered, careful exposition of the thought of its period, seeking the best matter of the time, and setting it forth in the best possible manner; and it is surely clear that what is written in excess of what is spoken (in excess I mean on the side of license) is a violence to, a misrepresentation of, the period to whose service the literature is devoted. The course of the highest thought of the time should be the course of its literature, the limit of the most delicate taste of the time the limit of literary expression: whatever falls below that standard is a shortcoming, whatever exceeds it a violence. Obviously the standard varies immensely with the period. It would be tedious, nor is it necessary to our purpose, to make a long historical research into the development of taste; but a few striking examples may help us to appreciate its variations.

To begin with a very early stage of literature, we find among the Heracleidae of Herodotus a stage

of contemporary taste which is the result of pure brutality. It is clear that literature adjusted to the frankness of the uxorious pleasantries of Candaules and Gyges would justifiably assume a degree of license which, reasonable enough in its environment, would be absolutely impossible, directly the influences of civilisation began to make themselves felt. The age is one of unrestrained brutality, and the literature which represented it would, without violence to the contemporary taste, be brutal too. To pass at a bound to the Rome of Juvenal is again to be transported to an age of national sensuality: the escapades of Messalina are the inevitable outcome of a national taste that is swamped and left putrescent by limitless self-indulgence; and the literature which represented this taste would, without violence, be lascivious and polluted to its depth. In continuing, with a still wider sweep, to the England of Shakespeare, we find a new development of taste altogether. Brutality is softened, licentiousness is restrained, immorality no longer stalks abroad shouting its coarse phrases at every wayfarer who passes the Mermaid or the Globe. But, even among types of purity, reticence is little known. The innuendoes are whispered under the breath, but when once the voice is lowered, it matters little what is said. Rosalind and Celia enjoy their little *doubles entendres* together. Hero's wedding morning is an occasion for delicate hints of experiences to come. Hamlet plies the coarsest suggestions upon Ophelia in the intervals of a theatrical performance. The language reflects the taste: we feel no violence here. To take but one more instance, let us end with Sheridan. By

his time speech had been refined by sentiment, and the most graceful compliments glide, without effort, from the lips of the adept courtier. But, even still, in the drawing-room of fashion, delicate morsels of scandal are discussed by his fine ladies with a freedom which is absolutely unknown to the Mayfair of the last half-century, where innuendo might be conveyed by the eye and suggested by the smile, but would never, so reticent has taste become, find the frank emphatic utterance which brought no blush to the cheek of Mrs. Candour and Lady Sneerwell. In the passage of time reticence has become more and more pronounced; and literature, moving, as it must, with the age, has assumed in its normal and wholesome form the degree of silence which it finds about it.

The standard of taste in literature, then, so far as it responds to contemporary judgment, should be regulated by the normal taste of the hale and cultured man of its age: it should steer a middle course between the prudery of the manse, which is for hiding everything vital, and the effrontery of the pot-house, which makes for ribaldry and bawdry; and the more it approximates to the exact equilibrium of its period, the more thoroughly does it become representative of the best taste of its time, the more certain is it of permanent recognition. The literature of shortcoming and the literature of violence have their reward.

"They have their day, and cease to be";

the literature which reflects the hale and wholesome frankness of its age can be read, with pleasure and profit, long after its openness of speech

and outlook has ceased to reproduce the surrounding life. The environment is ephemeral, but the literature is immortal. But why is the literature immortal? Why is it that a play like *Pericles*, for instance, full as it is of scenes which revolt the moral taste, has lived and is a classic forever, while innumerable contemporary pieces of no less genius (for *Pericles* is no masterpiece) have passed into oblivion? Why is it that the impurity of *Pericles* strikes the reader scarcely at all, while the memory dwells upon its beauties and forgets its foulness in recollection of its refinement? The reason is not far to seek. *Pericles* is not only free of offence when judged by the taste of its age, it is no less blameless when we subject it to the test by which all literature is judged at last: it conforms to the standard of art; it is permeated by the moral idea. The standard of art—the presence of the idea—the two expressions are, I believe, synonymous. It is easy enough to babble of the beauty of things considered apart from their meaning, it is easy enough to dilate on the satisfaction of art in itself, but all these phrases are merely collocations of terms, empty and meaningless. A thing can only be artistic by virtue of the idea it suggests to us; when the idea is coarse, ungainly, unspeakable, the object that suggests it is coarse, ungainly, unspeakable; art and ethics must always be allied in that the merit of the art is dependent on the merit of the idea it prompts.

Perhaps I shall show my meaning more clearly by an example from the more tangible art of painting; and let me take as an instance an artist who has produced pictures at once the most revolting and most moral of any in the

history of English art. I mean Hogarth. We are all familiar with his coarsenesses ; all these have we known from our youth up. But it is only the schoolboy who searches the Bible for its indecent passages ; when we are become men, we put away such childish satisfactions. Then we begin to appreciate the idea which underlies the subject : we feel that Hogarth—

> " Whose pictured morals charm the mind,
> And through the eye correct the heart "

was, even in his grossest moments, profoundly moral, entirely sane, because he never dallied lasciviously with his subject, because he did not put forth vice with the pleasing semblance of virtue, because, like all hale and wholesome critics of life, he condemned excess, and pictured it merely to portray the worthlessness, the weariness, the dissatisfaction of lust and license. Art, we say, claims every subject for her own ; life is open to her ken ; she may fairly gather her subjects where she will. Most true. But there is all the difference in the world between drawing life as we find it, sternly and relentlessly, surveying it all the while from outside with the calm, unflinching gaze of criticism, and, on the other hand, yielding ourselves to the warmth and colour of its excesses, losing our judgment in the ecstasies of the joy of life, becoming, in a word, effeminate.

The man lives by ideas ; the woman by sensations ; and while the man remains an artist so long as he holds true to his own view of life, the woman becomes one as soon as she throws off the habit of her sex, and learns to rely upon her judgment, and not upon her senses. It is only when

we regard life with the untrammelled view of the impartial spectator, when we pierce below the substance for its animating idea, that we approximate to the artistic temperament. It is unmanly, it is effeminate, it is inartistic to gloat over pleasure, to revel in immoderation, to become passion's slave; and literature demands as much calmness of judgment, as much reticence, as life itself. The man who loses reticence loses self-respect, and the man who has no respect for himself will scarcely find others to venerate him. After all, the world generally takes us at our own valuation.

We have now, I trust, arrived (though, it may be, by a rather circuitous journey) at something like a definite and reasonable law for the exercise of reticence; it only remains to consider by what test we shall most easily discover the presence or absence of the animating moral idea which we have found indispensable to art. It seems to me that three questions will generally suffice. Does the work, we should ask ourselves, make for that standard of taste which is normal to wholesomeness and sanity of judgment? Does it, or does it not, encourage us to such a line of life as is recommended, all question of tenet and creed apart, by the experience of the age, as the life best calculated to promote individual and general good? And does it encourage to this life in language and by example so chosen as not to offend the susceptibilities of that ordinarily strong and unaffected taste which, after all, varies very little with the changes of the period and development? When creative literature satisfies these three requirements—when it is sane, equable, and well spoken, then it is safe to say it conforms to the

moral idea, and is consonant with art. By its sanity it eludes the risk of effeminate demonstration; by its choice of language it avoids brutality; and between these two poles, it may be affirmed without fear of question, true taste will and must be found to lie.

These general considerations, already too far prolonged, become of immediate interest to us as soon as we attempt to apply them to the literature of our own half-century, and I propose concluding what I wished to say on the necessity of reticence by considering, briefly and without mention of names, the realistic movement in English literature which, under different titles, and protected by the ægis of various schools, has proved, without doubt, the most interesting and suggestive development in the poetry and fiction of our time. During the last quarter of a century, more particularly, the English man-of-letters has been indulging, with an entirely new freedom, his national birthright of outspokenness, and during the last twelve months there have been no uncertain indications that this freedom of speech is degenerating into license which some of us cannot but view with regret and apprehension. The writers and the critics of contemporary literature have, it would seem, alike lost their heads; they have gone out into the byways and hedges in search of the new thing, and have brought into the study and subjected to the microscope mean objects of the roadside, whose analysis may be of value to science, but is absolutely foreign to art. The age of brutality, pure and simple, is dead with us, it is true; but the age of effeminacy appears, if one is to judge by

recent evidence, to be growing to its dawn. The day that follows will, if it fulfils the promise of its morning, be very serious and very detrimental to our future literature.

Every great productive period of literature has been the result of some internal or external revulsion of feeling, some current of ideas. This is a commonplace. The greatest periods of production have been those when the national mind has been directed to some vast movement of emancipation—the discovery of new countries, the defeat of old enemies, the opening of fresh possibilities. Literature is best stimulated by stirrings like these. Now, the last quarter of a century in English history has been singularly sterile of important improvements. There has been no very inspiring acquisition to territory or to knowledge: there has been, in consequence, no marked influx of new ideas. The mind has been thrown back upon itself; lacking stimulus without, it has sought inspiration within, and the most characteristic literature of the time has been introspective. Following one course, it has betaken itself to that intimately analytical fiction which we associate primarily with America; it has sifted motives and probed psychology, with the result that it has proved an exceedingly clever, exact, and scientific, but scarcely stimulating, or progressive school of literature. Following another course, it has sought for subject-matter in the discussion of passions and sensations, common, doubtless, to every age of mankind, interesting and necessary, too, in their way, but passions and sensations hitherto dissociated with literature, hitherto, perhaps, scarcely realised to their depth and

intensity. It is in this development that the new school of realism has gone furthest; and it is in this direction that the literature of the future seems likely to follow. It is, therefore, not without value to consider for a moment whither this new frankness is leading us, and how far its freedom is reconciled to that standard of necessary reticence which I have tried to indicate in these pages.

This present tendency to literary frankness had its origin, I think, no less than twenty-eight years ago.* It was then that the dovecotes of English taste were tremulously fluttered by the coming of a new poet, whose naked outspokenness startled his readers into indignation. Literature, which had retrograded into a melancholy sameness, found itself convulsed by a sudden access of passion, which was probably without parallel since the age of the silver poets of Rome. This new singer scrupled not to revel in sensations which for years had remained unmentioned upon the printed page; he even chose for his subjects refinements of lust, which the commonly healthy Englishman believed to have become extinct with the time of Juvenal. Here was an innovation which was absolutely alien to the standard of contemporary taste—an innovation, I believe, that was equally opposed to that final moderation without which literature is lifeless.

Let us listen for one moment:

"By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwisted and bitten
Till the foam has a savour of blood,

* This article originally appeared in 1894.

By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,
The white wealth of thy body made whiter
By the blushes of amorous blows,
And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
And branded by kisses that bruise;
When all shall be gone that now lingers,
Ah, what shall we lose?

Thou wert fair in thy fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret,
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain."

This was twenty-eight years ago; and still the poetry lives. At first sight it would seem as though the desirable reticence, upon which we have been insisting, were as yet unnecessary to immortality. A quarter of a century has passed, it might be argued, and the verse is as fresh to-day and as widely recognised as it was in its morning: is not this a proof that art asks for no moderation? I believe not. It is true that the poetry lives, that we all recognise, at some period of our lives, the grasp and tenacity of its influence; that, even when the days come in which we say we have no pleasure in it, we still turn to it at times for something we do not find elsewhere. But the thing we seek is not the matter, but the manner. The

poetry is living, not by reason of its unrestrained frankness, but in spite of it, for the sake of something else. That sweet singer who charmed and shocked the audiences of 1866, charms us, if he shocks us not now, by virtue of the one new thing that he imported into English poetry, the unique and as yet imperishable faculty of musical possibilities hitherto unattained. There is no such music in all the range of English verse, seek where you will, as there is in him. But the perfection of the one talent, its care, its elaboration, have resulted in a corresponding decay of those other faculties by which alone, in the long run, poetry can live. Open him where you will, there is in his poetry neither construction nor proportion; no development, no sustained dramatic power. Open him where you will, you acquire as much sense of his meaning and purpose from any two isolated stanzas as from the study of a whole poem. There remains in your ears, when you have ceased from reading, the echo only of a beautiful voice, chanting, as it were, the melodies of some outland tongue.

Is this the sort of poetry that will survive without challenge the trouble of the ages? It cannot so survive. When the time comes that some newer singer discovers melodies as yet unknown, melodies which surpass in their modulations and varieties those poems and ballads of twenty-eight years ago, what will be left of the earlier singer, to which we shall of necessity return? A message? No. Philosophy? No. A new vision of life? No. A criticism of contemporary existence? Assuredly not. There remains the melody alone; and this, when once it is surpassed, will remain little

more than a literary curiosity and a faded charm. Art brings in her revenges, and this will be of them.

But the new movement did not stop here. If, in the poet we have been discussing, we have found the voice among us that corresponds to the decadent voices of the failing Roman Republic, there has reached us from France another utterance, which I should be inclined to liken to the outspoken brutality of Restoration drama. Taste no longer fails on the ground of a delicate, weakly dalliance, it begins to see its own limitations, and springs to the opposite pole. It will now be virile, full of the sap of life, strong, robust, and muscular. It will hurry us out into the fields, will show us the coarser passions of the common farm-hand; at any expense it will paint the life it finds around it; it will at least be consonant with that standard of want of taste which it falsely believes to be contemporary. We get a realistic fiction abroad, and we begin to copy it at home. We will trace the life of the travelling actor, follow him into the vulgar, sordid surroundings which he chooses for the palace of his love, be it a pottery-shed or the ill-furnished lodging-room with its black horsehair sofa—we will draw them all, and be faithful to the lives we live. Is that the sort of literature that will survive the trouble of the ages? It cannot survive. We are no longer untrue to our time, perhaps, if we are to seek for the heart of that time in the lowest and meanest of its representatives; but we are untrue to art, untrue to the record of our literary past, when we are content to turn for our own inspiration to anything but the best line of thought, the highest

school of life, through which we are moving. This grosser realism is no more representative of its time than were the elaborate pastiches of classical degradation; it is as though one should repeople Eden with creatures imagined from a study of the serpent's head. In the history of literature this movement, too, will with the lapse of time pass unrecognised; it has mourned unceasingly to an age which did not lack for innocent piping and dancing in its market-places.

The two developments of realism of which we have been speaking seem to me to typify the two excesses into which frankness is inclined to fall; on the one hand, the excess prompted by effeminacy—that is to say, by the want of restraint which starts from enervated sensation; and on the other, the excess which results from a certain brutal virility, which proceeds from coarse familiarity with indulgence. The one whispers, the other shouts; the one is the language of the courtesan, the other of the bargee. What we miss in both alike is that true frankness which springs from the artistic and moral temperament; the episodes are no part of a whole in unity with itself; the impression they leave upon the reader is not the impression of Hogarth's pictures; in one form they employ all their art to render vice attractive, in the other, with absolutely no art at all, they merely reproduce, with the fidelity of the kodak, scenes and situations the existence of which we all acknowledge, while taste prefers to forget them.

But the latest development of literary frankness is, I think, the most insidious and fraught with the greatest danger to art. A new school has

arisen which combines the characteristics of effeminacy and brutality. In its effeminate aspect it plays with the subtler emotions of sensual pleasure, on its brutal side it has developed into that class of fiction which for want of a better word I must call chirurgical. In poetry it deals with very much the same passions as those which we have traced in the verse to which allusion has been made above ; but, instead of leaving these refinements of lust to the haunts to which they are fitted, it has introduced them into the domestic chamber, and permeated marriage with the ardours of promiscuous intercourse. In fiction it infects its heroines with acquired diseases of names unmentionable, and has debased the beauty of maternity by analysis of the process of gestation. Surely the inartistic temperament can scarcely abuse literature further. I own I can conceive nothing less beautiful.

It was said of a great poet by a little critic that he wheeled his nuptial couch into the area ; but these small poets and smaller novelists bring out their sick into the thoroughfare, and stop the traffic while they give us a clinical lecture upon their sufferings. We are told that this is a part of the revolt of woman, and certainly our women-writers are chiefly to blame. It is out of date, no doubt, to clamour for modesty ; but the woman who describes the sensations of childbirth does so, it is to be presumed—not as the writer of advice to a wife—but as an artist producing literature for art's sake. And so one may fairly ask her : How is art served by all this ? What has she told us that we did not all know, or could not learn from medical manuals ? and what impression

has she left us over and above the memory of her unpalatable details? And our poets, who know no rhyme for "rest" but that "breast" whose snowinesses and softnesses they are for ever describing with every accent of indulgence, whose eyes are all for frills, if not for garters, what have they sung that was not sung with far greater beauty and sincerity in the days when frills and garters were alluded to with the open frankness that cried shame on him who evil thought. The one extremity, it seems to me, offends against the standard of contemporary taste; ("people," as Hedda Gabler said, "do not say such things now"); the other extremity rebels against that universal standard of good taste that has from the days of Milo distinguished between the naked and the nude. We are losing the distinction now; the cry for realism, naked and unashamed, is borne in upon us from every side:

"Rip your brother's vices open, strip your own foul passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them stare."

But there was an Emperor once (we know the story) who went forth among his people naked. It was said that he wore fairy clothes, and that only the unwise could fail to see them. At last a little child raised its voice from the crowd! "Why, he has nothing on," it said. And so these writers of ours go out from day to day, girded on, they would have us believe, with the garments of art; and fashion has lacked the courage to cry out with the little child; "They have nothing on." No robe of art, no texture of skill, they whirl

before us in a bacchanalian dance naked and unashamed. But the time will come, it must, when the voices of the multitude will take up the cry of the child, and the revellers will hurry to their houses in dismay. Without dignity, without self-restraint, without the morality of art, literature has never survived ; they are the few who rose superior to the baser levels of their time, who stand unimpugned among the immortals now. And that mortal who would put on immortality must first assume that habit of reticence, that garb of humility by which true greatness is best known. To endure restraint—*that* is to be strong.

April, 1894.

THE ABUSE OF THE SUPERLATIVE

IN one of Browning's letters to Elizabeth Barrett there is an amusing story of an amateur critic who volunteered his "absolutely frank criticism" to a friend's volume of manuscript sonnets. He started on the first sonnet with marginal notes to each line; and, his depression increasing with each effort, he was at last left without the possibility of a further superlative. For his comments, line for line, were as follows:

bad	badderest	worsterer
worse	worser	worsterest
worst	worserer	worserestest
badder	worserest	worstestest
badderer	worster	

Having proved himself so far a master of comparison, the critic, says Browning, "slapping his forehead like an emptied strong-box, declared himself bankrupt, and honourably incompetent to satisfy the reasonable expectations of the rest of the series!" The story is good as a story, and it is something more. It is typical of a large amount of current criticism and of ordinary descriptive literature. The dominion of the superlative is, indeed, a marked characteristic of facile and thoughtless writing; and anyone who takes the trouble to analyse the style of the common feminine novelist, or of the popular form of cheap journalist, will find that its apparent forcefulness is almost entirely derived from the lavish use of the third degree of comparison. In the language

of the decorative newspaper, we are living in an age where everything is "most impressive," "most heroic," and "most immortal"; and, no doubt, if we only knew our own good fortune, we should all be joining in the chorus of self-congratulation. In the meanwhile, criticism has now and then something to say on the other side, and there are a few arguments against the superlative, which may be worth a page or two's consideration.

In the first place, it must be obvious that the cases in which the superlative can be justly used are, inevitably, very few. Many things may be "good," but only one from the many can be "best"; and though an Oxford first-class contains several names, Cambridge has (or had till very lately) only one Senior Wrangler a year. But the writer who has a poverty of words finds much virtue in a superlative. To use it saves him from the labour of selection; it gives a certain showy emphasis to his sentence, and, to the unreflecting reader, it carries a kind of conviction. Now, women are by nature more careless than men; they are also more prone to enthusiasm. It is, therefore, natural that the lady novelist should be particularly given to the superlative, and, indeed, some of the choicest flowers of over-emphasis are to be found in the favourites of the circulating library. Where a woman would, in writing a letter, underline the adjective, she substitutes in her novel the glowing superlative. There was a highly successful, and really meritorious, romance a few seasons back, in which the first few pages contained a description of the return of a master-of-hounds from hunting.

There, in about five hundred lines, were so many synonyms for "noisy," "loud," "bellowing," "cracking," "sibilant," "shouting," "yelling," "banging," and the like, with such a decoration of superlatives to emphasize them, that the sensitive reader had scarcely ears left to settle down upon the story. Like the distracted Fanny Squeers, these good ladies write, "screaming out loud all the time," and the result of the cumulative effort is that the work loses effect altogether. The individual is lost in the mass, and the method is something like that of a small private school, where every boy receives a prize.

But, though courtesy gives pride of place to women, they are by no means the only offenders. Indeed, since the influence of the novel is clearly waning with us just now, and the importance of the Press is increasing every month, it may be fairly said that in journalism the "superlative" style is even more harmful to a sense of literary proportion. A little while ago, Mr. Max Beerbohm directed the shafts of his wit against the *clichés* of the modern journalist, and the tired melancholy of his battered method. Hand in hand with that fossilized style goes the perpetual abuse of the superlative, one of the most tedious fashions of newspaper ineptitude. A great deal of literary criticism has always been done in the style of the reporter, and, no doubt, questions of domestic economy render it impossible for every journal to employ a staff of expert reviewers. But to the eye of Criticism there can be no excuse for the presence in the leading "dailies" of much of the over-emphatic, hysterical bombast that is forced week by week to do its own neglected duties.

" This, we say it without hesitation, is one of the most mature productions of the decade." " The *dénouement* is the most unique we have met in recent fiction." The old phrases ring back in the old changes. No one really believes them. Is it not time that they were decently interred ?

Indeed, that same expression " most unique " reminds one of another abuse of the superlative—its employment in connexions where it really adds nothing to the sense, since the word it qualifies is implicitly superlative. A thing cannot be more than " unique " ; if it is " unique " it is already isolated. Nor can an event be " most singular " ; if it is " singular " it is already removed from the crowd and set apart. Then, too, there is the familiar expression, " the patient's condition is most critical," which is, perhaps, the acme of tautology. For, if the sick man has reached the crisis, he is at the apex of the disease ; a crisis cannot be " more " or " most " critical. The word itself is, in short, an implicit superlative.

It may, perhaps, be argued that these are niceties, and that the broad brush of journalism is expressly designed to sweep away such particularities. But the question is one of radical importance ; of what Arnold called an " incurable defect of style." For after all, the great arguments against the indiscriminate superlative are its insincerity and vulgarity, and the harm which such qualities must inevitably do to the public mind. No man can use the perpetual superlative sincerely, since he cannot frankly believe that everything he has to describe is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. " In

the rich vocabulary of love," as Tennyson said, " most dearest is a true superlative " ; but lovers have a language of their own, and the critic stops short at their rose-garlanded portals ! Outside that kingdom, to use words without measuring their meaning is literary insincerity, and that is one of the unpardonable sins. Moreover, it is vulgar ; and in literature vulgarity stands side by side with insincerity in the pillory. The sentence glittering with superlatives is like the vulgar woman who blazes with too many diamonds ; you cannot see her fingers for the rings. And, while it matters very little, so long as she stays at home and " plays the fool in her own house," she begins to do harm directly she flaunts it abroad. Her decorations set a fashion (in paste) for the lower middle-classes, and simplicity is at a discount. In the same way, every meretricious phrase that is given currency in high places sets a precedent for the circle that lies just below it ; the language is gradually debased ; and taste and proportion are slowly undermined. Nor must this be thought too serious a view of what may seem, at first sight, a trivial trick of emphasis. Nothing is so essential to literary progress as a sense of proportion, and nothing is so easily upset. When one man starts shouting, another must follow suit, if he is to make himself heard ; and soon the whole forum is in an uproar. But Truth is not found in clamour.

" Low at her feet the wild waves howl for hate ;
She is so calm, and they so passionate."

In quietness and confidence is the strength of literature, and confidence can only be earned, as

alone it is deserved, by moderation, dignity, and reticence. Every man who "lives down" the superlative does something, however small his audience, to maintain the dignity of letters. And it may safely be said that, wherever the literature of a country lacks dignity, there is something amiss with the national life and character.

SOME MOVEMENTS IN VICTORIAN POETRY

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I.—The Period and the Field

A WIDE and broken field of literary activity, as full of interest as of vitality, is spread before the imagination by even a brief survey or bird's-eye view of the principal movements which have affected the poetry of the Victorian era. That era is now not only closed, but to some extent discounted; and it is not unnatural that we should already begin to regard it as a "portion of the past" and to feel sufficiently removed from it to recount its vicissitudes and to reckon up its achievements. And in the field of poetry this task is rendered less difficult by the fact that the flowering period of Victorian poetry had actually spent itself before the death of Tennyson, now more than twenty years ago. The poetical activity of the last ten years of the nineteeth century was, it is true, marked by a feverish and fitful energy in certain fields, side by side with steady and progressive production in others; and these symptoms clearly imply the healthy survival of poetic intention and ambition. Still, despite these suggestive activities, the last representative of the characteristic literary movements of the age had already passed away before there became any question of the succession of the laureateship. And so we are, perhaps, already emancipated enough from the partisan influence of the movements

which they represented to be able to regard their work, if not altogether dispassionately, at least with some degree of critical interest; we can see something of the import and effect of the movements which at the time of their prevalence it was more difficult to distinguish and discount. Such, at any rate, is the object of the present survey, which will confine itself entirely to poetical movements in the Victorian era, and will endeavour to trace their succession and interrelation, with some reference, where possible, to their influence upon the condition of English poetry at the present moment.

And, first, it is necessary to premise that the survey is one of *movements* only; clearly no attempt could be made in so restricted a space to give a complete *conspectus* of all the poetry of the period. But the Victorian era, in politics, in thought, and in literature was pre-eminently an era of movements; and poetry, which so closely reflects the tone and temper of its age, could scarcely fail to be affected by them. As a matter of fact, the interests and anxieties of the Victorian period entered into its poetry with an emphasis almost unparalleled in the history of English literature. The gradual advance of science, the consequent readjustment of disturbed dogmas, the enthusiasms and responsibilities entailed in the enlargement of national dominions—all these things were reflected, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, in the poetry of the time; and often it is an oblique or indirect reflection that shows the prevalent tenour of thought most clearly. This is, indeed, the characteristic which distinguishes a literary movement from a literary school. A school of

literature, and particularly a school of poetry, is easy enough to distinguish. It consists of a dominant leader, dictating a tone and attitude to a band of disciples; the band may be numerous and distinguished, but they add little of their own to the example of their master, and their discipleship is practically a phase of euphuism. But a movement is another thing altogether. In a movement there may be many and diverse spirits, suggesting widely different solutions to the same problem. They are combined only in their interest in the same aspect of thought or life, and in a certain harmony, which leads them indeed to pursue the problem towards the same goal, but not necessarily to pursue it along the same line. And in poetry their differences may seem, at first sight, even greater than their similarities. Difference of manner, variety of method, and all the changing complications due to metrical innovation make it very difficult to trace with accuracy the by-ways and ramifications of a poetical movement. The student of literary movements, in short, has to be careful to avoid superficiality; he must not be too ready to assume that men who are alike in manner are also alike in spirit, or, on the other hand, that dissimilarity in method implies necessarily antagonism in purpose. The whole ground indeed is intersected and overrun with common rights and privileges, and the very inter-relation of interests is among the most fruitful sources of discussion.

It is not difficult, however, to discern certain main tendencies, and to the study of these we now propose to direct our attention. In confining ourselves to these we must, of course,

court certain disappointments; for some of the most companionable poets of the period cannot be referred to any particular movement at all. It can hardly be maintained, for example, that the Victorian era has been marked by any conspicuous movement in the poetic drama: and the dignified and impressive figure of Sir Henry Taylor stands apart from an estimate which is concerned with tendencies rather than with individuals. In the same way William Barnes, our Victorian Theocritus, was really a law to himself, and can scarcely be referred to any definite fellowship of poets. And the list might be largely increased, including poets of a transition stage no less than those who have sustained an already falling note; so that many honoured names must necessarily be set aside in a discussion like the present. Still it is remarkable to see how many of the most individual poets of the time are clearly representatives of movements; and it by no means requires too curious an inquiry to trace their inspiration to its fountain-head.

The period, we have already noticed, was one of continual change and intellectual restlessness. It was marked by violent enthusiasms followed by reactions of disappointment. Political movements such as the Reform Bill, religious revivals such as the Oxford Movement and the Broad Church humanism of Maurice and Kingsley, stirred warm anticipations which the subsequent course of events did not invariably realize. And behind all these, the slow but steady advance of science, like an incoming sea, has stealthily swept away old land-marks. The time was one of spiritual anarchy, of the gradual breaking up of old

ideals, and of the difficult settlement of new conclusions. Poetry has sometimes withstood the tide, and sometimes gone with it; but in either case it has been affected, and radically affected, by the current of thought. And in its own turn it has had to meet the opposition of literary criticism, and this very opposition has tended to combine it into movements. When the *Quarterlies* were started, in the early years of the century, they were started for the precise purpose of arresting what seemed to their founders a menacing torrent of innovation, and throughout the period the criticism which they represented was the last to abandon the citadel of convention. Almost every fresh and vital movement in poetry has been opposed by the responsible organs of criticism; and consequently we find the rather strange coexistence of a poetry peculiarly susceptible to novel influences, side by side with a criticism strenuously directed to the suppression of anything that seems to threaten innovation or revolt. The natural result ensues. Poetry draws its scattered forces closer and closer together; varying spirits combine towards the same end, and the poetical movement becomes a living and accumulative power.

Victorian poetry, strictly speaking, began to flower a few years before the historical commencement of the Victorian era. The field had been gradually clearing for a fresh poetic outburst. From 1822 to the close of his life, the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" and "Yarrow Revisited" were Wordsworth's only important publications. Coleridge died in 1834, and had then been silent nine years, Samuel Rogers's last great poem

" Italy " appeared as far back as 1828. In 1832 Crabbe and Sir Walter Scott both died, and with them two distinct poetic movements fell for a time into desuetude. Southey was occupied with more congenial prose, and Moore's Irish melodies were exhausted. Then suddenly in 1833 appeared two little volumes, too little regarded, which heralded the new era. Tennyson's " Poems " and Browning's " Pauline " were published within a few months of each other, and with them Victorian poetry may be said to have put forth its shoots. Thenceforward for more than fifty years English poetry was to flourish as never since the days of Elizabeth. These two periods, indeed—the Elizabethan and the Victorian—stand out in sisterly companionship of brilliancy in the whole history of English poetry ; but their characters are widely different. They differ both in the ideal which they espoused, and in the difficulties by which they were let and hindered. In Elizabeth's time the concern of poetry was the life of man and his relation to his fellows ; in the Victorian period it was the soul of man and his relation to his creator. Differently as the different schools have viewed this problem, they are none of them very far removed from its anxieties ; and, whether they issue in aspiration and faith, in reflection and doubt, in emotion, or in tired reaction, they are alike related to the vast expansion of ideas which modern science has forced upon the intellectual world. John Stuart Mill said of Browning's " Pauline " that its writer possessed a deeper self-consciousness than he had ever known in a sane human being, and it was just this self-consciousness, self-analysis, or self-concern which

was to be the dominant note of the poetry of the time. And the inevitable outcome of this self-concentration, whether it found effect in the introspective seclusion of the thinker, or in the struggle for increased influence in the worker, was a succession of enthusiasms and ill-regarded aspirations which were bound to dissolve themselves in disappointment. Movement followed movement, one spiritual impulse gave place to another, and the ideals of one generation became the contempt of the next.

How poetry has borne itself towards this turmoil of contending hopes and interests we hope to be able to trace briefly in the succeeding articles. One thing, it is clear, we shall not expect of it. So harrassed and impeded by false cries and broken illusions, its makers cannot have the buoyancy, the happiness, and fresh sense of life that lit up the energy of their Elizabethan forerunners. Victorian poetry is not gay; youth and the spring morning are alike over and done with. But we shall find it intensely earnest, even in reaction; sincere in its striving towards a still inaccessible knowledge:

> "Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
> Still clutching the inviolable shade."

It did not, at any rate, shirk the difficulties by which it was beset; and if at its close, after long and honourable effort, it seemed for a moment exhausted, the interval has proved that it was only gathering itself together for fresh activities on the morrow. For one advantage which we derive from the study of poetic movements is this; we perceive with increasing certainty that the

chain of intellectual vigour is unbroken, and that the continuity of poetry and the poetical spirit is perpetual. And even in so partial a study as the present we ought to be able to suggest, however inadequately, the way in which all true poetry, in spite of superficial discrepancies and apparent antagonisms, is really and indissolubly related. That, at least, is the object of the survey, be its shortcomings what they must.

II.—The Poetry of Faith and Aspiration

The Victorian era was, as we have seen, broken up into numerous and conflicting movements, and at first sight the interests and expectations which they arouse seem scarcely reconcilable. But, upon closer examination, it will be found that all these diverse enthusiasms are related and very closely related to two main distinguishing characteristics of the epoch, two waves that steadily advance until they fill and flood, as it were, all the creeks and inlets of contemporary thought. The advance of science and the advance of the democratic spirit—the one widening the intellectual horizon and illuminating every sort of hidden corner of tradition and authority, the other breathing energy and ambition into the dry bones of an inert and decadent section of society—these two great movements of emancipation either absorb or direct all the other interests of the period. The spirits which are frankly revolutionary, openly in antagonism with tradition and authority, they absorb ; those which are jealous of old forms and loyalties they cannot indeed absorb, but they still direct them, turning

the course of their thought, and forcing them at least to weigh, and in their degree to recognize, claims which had never before entered into the serious consideration of literature and life.

And of all scientific systems the one most characteristic of the period is, of course, that of Evolution. The Victorian era was indeed well advanced before Charles Darwin set forth in "The Origin of Species" what may be called the first modern evangel of Evolution, but the ideas which he there crystallized had long been in the air, and their gradual growth may be traced in the spiritual, no less than in the scientific, literature of the time. And side by side with this theory of physical derivation and interrelation, this doctrine (one might almost call it) of universal brotherhood, there was steadily growing a new principle of individual emancipation and liberty, fostered in literature by the careless, happy optimism of Macaulay on the one side, and on the other by John Stuart Mill's emphatic, earnest doctrine of utilitarianism. The Reform Bill of 1832 promised an enlargement of interests that seemed to lead into an indefinite millennium; the people was at last to get its own; thought was free; and the old order overwhelmed. Under two such towering waves it was natural that much of the old faith and aspiration should go down: natural, too, that some resistance should be made, and some attempt to reconcile the prevailing theory with the earlier and still, happily, current belief. The natural attitude of man is not so much one of revolt as of compromise; and the characteristic attitude towards innovation is one of temperate reconciliation. And so it is not surprising

to find that the most prominent and distinctive poetry of the epoch is that in which the theory of evolution is implicit, in which some of its corollaries are deliberately accepted, but which, at the same time, accepts them almost unconsciously, and directs its whole endeavour to the raising of man's ideals above the material sphere of interest, permeating the material world with spiritual significance. This is what we call the poetry of Faith and Aspiration, and we find it, sustained by the fortunate longevity of its leaders, the most continuous and characteristic movement of the age.

But here at the outset we must discriminate, for this representative phase of poetry is not to be confused with purely religious or devotional poetry, strong and fruitful as that "tree of life" has proved during the period under discussion. Keble's sensitive and often exquisite reflection, and Christina Rossetti's almost liturgical fervour, are too unquestioning in their spiritual devotion, too direct in their confident appeal, to be affected by current thought in the way in which truly representative poetry is affected. These are, on the contrary, examples of that divine and placid insensibility to outside interests which dignifies the monk in his cell or the priest before the altar; they are altogether part of the worship of God, unstained by the touch of man. But the poetry which comes from spiritual anxiety, conceived in the very intensity of contemporary interest, is another thing entirely; and of this the period affords us three eminent examples, singularly different both in scope and method, so different, indeed, as to seem at first sight completely diverse,

and yet all closely united in faith in the progress of man, and in that continuity of spiritual energy which postulates the immortality of the soul.

Tennyson, Browning, and Coventry Patmore —it would be difficult to choose three contemporary names suggesting more various and divergent trains of thought. In method they are altogether dissimilar. Tennyson's exquisite lyricism is as unlike Browning's rugged but penetrating bursts of music as both are to the elaborately constructed, cumulative harmonies of Patmore's full-toned odes. Nor do they differ less in personality. Tennyson is eminently social, almost universal in sympathy; the progress and life of the people is his perpetual theme, even his intimate poems and on an impersonal note. Browning, on the other hand, is concerned exclusively with the individual soul as the microcosm, dissecting and analysing the motive, probing the personality, and arguing from the single example to the generalization. Finally, Patmore is self-centred, introspective; by far the most self-conscious of the three, and by far the narrowest in interest; and yet rising on the wings of self-realization to heights of spiritual ecstasy sublimely unclouded by controversy. These are widely different natures indeed; and yet they are closely related in a brotherhood of purpose. And first, let us consider them with relation to the dominant theory of evolution.

For evolution, as a scientific theory, Tennyson entertained apprehensions, not for its own sake, but for the difficulties which accompany it in the common mind. The thoughtless man would make it a stumbling block, while to the intelligent it should be a "sounding watchword."

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

* * * * * *

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man was born.
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,
Only that which made us meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the human eye,
Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul,
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the whole."

The theory, he saw, was capable of infinite spiritual expansion ; its danger was that, confined to the material sphere, it might lose all spiritual significance and stifle human ambition. So, with a really wonderful adroitness, he fitted it into his scheme till it became its inseparable part and parcel. To Tennyson the secret of the world was the law of order, the gradual progress by steps of slow improvement ; and into this theory the doctrine of evolution very naturally fitted. " I believe in progress," he said once, " but a progress conserving the hopes of man " ; and, as Professor Dowden has very pertinently pointed out, the whole fabric of his philosophy is symbolized in the decoration of Merlin's Hall in " The Holy Grail." For

" Four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall :
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,

And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star."

Here, in a picture, is the whole theory of evolution, beginning in the material world, rising to the spiritual, and sublimated by a suggestion of divine perfectibility. The race is gradually to grow in grace, rising on stepping stones of its dead self to higher things.

Browning's interest, on the other hand, is not so much with the race as with the individual, nor so much with order as with self-realization. It is a natural sequel of Tennyson's sense of orderly progress that the individual must be subjected to the interests of the race, his passions and enthusiasms merged into the general pæan of hope and aspiration. But Browning's claim is for the individual altogether. He must realize himself, growing into shape like clay upon the potter's wheel.

" Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor ! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
' Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone, seize to-day ! '

" Fool ! all that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall ;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure ;
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be ;
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure."

Here again is, implicitly, the evolutionary doctrine, but applied now directly to the individual. Even more directly we find it in " Evelyn Hope."

> " No, indeed ! for God above
> Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
> And creates the love to reward the love ;
> I claim you still, for my own love's sake :
> Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
> Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
> Much is to learn, much to forget
> Ere the time be come for taking you."

Had we space, instances might, of course, be multiplied indefinitely, but we have already enough to indicate the main tendency, and its distinguishing difference. The human soul, using its life here as a *palaestra* or exercising ground of the faculties and emotions, is hereafter to grow and flower till it comes to the measure of the perfect man. And to this end no faculty must be neglected, no healthful emotion unexercised ; the perfection of nature will be the harmony of all.

In Patmore we find a rather different interpretation. He is, as we have said, by far the most self-conscious of our three poets, and his natural tendency to introspection was fostered by his adoption of that form of the Christian religion which most encourages self-analysis and self-judgment. From that religion, too, he gathered its most beautiful and inspiring motive—the sense of the universality of the divine Love, which he developed into a sort of pantheism of the affections, seeing Love everywhere in God, and God everywhere in Love. With him the human passions have full sway, as being manifestations of the divine order ; and it is in moments

irradiated by the ecstasy of love that the poet feels himself closest to the God whose very name is Love itself. Here, too, though scientific theories are as far as possible from the poet's interest, the sense of evolutionary development is faintly perceived and recognised, as indeed it has always been recognised, in the Christian religion properly understood.

> " I, trusting that the truly sweet
> Would still be sweetly found the true,
> Sang, darkling, taught by heavenly heat,
> Songs which were wiser than I knew.
> To the unintelligible dream
> That melted like a gliding star,
> I said ' We part to meet, fair gleam !
> You are eternal, for you *are*,"

And then, as regards the great democratic movement, the advance of the influence of the mob—here, too, we find the three poets in diverse agreement. We will take Patmore first, as being naturally most estranged by it.

> " Lo, weary of the greatness of her ways,
> There lies my Land, with hasty pulse and hard,
> Her ancient beauty marr'd,
> And, in her cold and aimless roving sight,
> Horror of light ;
> Sole vigour left in her last lethargy,
> Save when, at bidding of some dreadful breath,
> The rising death
> Rolls up with force ;
> And then the furiously gibbering corse
> Shakes, panglessly convuls'd, and sightless stares,
> Whilst one Physician pours in rousing wines,
> One anodynes,
> And one declares
> That nothing ails it but the pains of growth.

My last look loth
Is taken; and I turn with the relief
Of knowing that my life-long hope and grief
Are surely vain,
To that unshapen time to come, when She
A dim heroic Nation long since dead,
The foulness of her agony forgot,
Shall all benignly shed
Through ages vast
The ghostly grace of her transfigured past
Over the present, harass'd and forlorn,
Of nations yet unborn."

This is apparent pessimism; but at the close the depression is relieved by hope, by the sense of the evolution of national history, and of the permanent influence of English character and ideal. Tennyson, too, felt the dangers of democracy, and was often gravely depressed by it, but he, too, and much more emphatically than Patmore, ended in confidence in the progress of the human race.

"Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.
Follow Light and do the Right for man can half control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb."

And Browning, indomitable optimist, was still more confident. For this is his picture of himself.

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,

Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

And if of these three voices Browning's seems the only one unquestioningly confident, it is well to remember, as we have already tried to indicate, that the period through which these three poets moved into honoured age was one of more than ordinary expectation and disappointment. The popular ideals of the forties and the fifties are already withered and laid aside; and these men, who saw the era set out with such high hopes, may well have been given pause by its failure to realize their promises. And there were moments when they all—yes even Browning—were depressed by the course of events, and uncertain whether the spiritual future of the nation was not to drift upon the rocks. Nevertheless they emerged in confidence. They were confident in the permanence of those ideals which had been proved in the past; confident, too, of the survival of spiritual energy, and of the immortality of the soul. In this, of course, they were by no means alone; the poetry of their time was rich in high aspiration and in fidelity to old ideals; it is rich in the same qualities to-day. But these three, in very different ways, are representatives of three great classes of the enthusiastic: of those who believe primarily in order and restraint, of those who rely rather upon energy and individuality, and of those who merge all action in fidelity to a formal but humanizing faith. And of their representative value and formative influence, we shall be able to judge more clearly when we come to consider some of the other poetical movements and spiritual distractions of their day.

III.—The Poetry of Reflection and Doubt.

The intellectual and poetic movement which we have now to consider is of peculiar interest, since it differs in one radical and essential respect from almost all the other developments of the period. Movements, whether political or literary, are as a rule, it seems almost unnecessary to say, inspired by some common enthusiasm either constructive or destructive, and are directed towards the achievement of some positive aim, or the support of some definite and stimulating ideal. And this is true not only of movements of advance, but also of movements of retreat; reaction itself is addressed to the amelioration of some fixed and appreciated wrong, and it is as easy to trace the point upon which the retreat is based as that to which the preceding advance was directed. But the intellectual and poetic movement which now comes under our consideration is one neither of action nor of reaction; its attitude is essentially hesitating and undefined. It stands midway between spiritual confidence, on the one hand, and scepticism or resignation, on the other; it resigns much, without resigning all, and it is left uncertain of its own bearings, halting between two opinions, reflective, doubtful.

And its interest and importance are very much increased by the fact that, while it is representative of a contemporary tendency very wide-spread and penetrating, the expression of that tendency is confined, and inevitably confined, to a very narrow area indeed. The tendency, we say, is widespread, because the natural attitude of the reflective man towards current enthusiasms is

one of hesitancy and dissection ; and yet, on the other hand, the expression of such hesitancy in literature, or at any rate in poetry, is rare ; since the art of literary expression invites enthusiasms, and prospers under their influence, while it withers and desiccates under the spirit of indecision. In the present movement, which we call the Poetry of Reflection and Doubt, two names only stand out conspicuously, representing two attitudes, divergent but allied, towards the spiritual aspirations of their day ; and in the poetry of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough we may trace the quintessence of an intellectual movement which is actually spreading at the present time far more widely than it spread in their own, and which is continually re-echoed, without much helpful addition, in the " minor " verse of the younger generation. This movement has, therefore, an unusual interest for the student of tendencies, since it is inextricably bound up with the advance of culture during the last fifty years, and with the influence of that reverend University, whose sound continues to go out into all lands, as her sons increase in number and achievement. This is, indeed, the Oxford movement in poetry ; and it follows, no less certainly than it reacts from, that other great Oxford movement, whose beautiful and increasing influence to-day testifies to the integrity and strength upon which it was founded.

" There were voices in the air when I was at Oxford," said Arnold, and they were voices of great persuasiveness and charm. It is only when we consider the apathy into which the services of the Church had fallen towards the close of the

eighteenth century, when we recall the divorce from beauty which had extended itself throughout the forms of public worship, that we can form any idea of the sudden warmth and energy which that movement instilled into the religion of the country. Nor was the revival one of form alone, or even of form in the first place. The outward symbols of beauty, restored from the unbroken traditions of the past, were designed, of course, to direct the mind towards the eternal ideas which they represented; the spirit was one of unity, cohesion, and authority. Above all things it was a spirit of authority. The dominant position of the Church as mistress of her own was to be reasserted with every emphasis; her power of self-government in the spiritual sphere was to be vindicated at any cost. Yes, "there were voices in the air at Oxford," voices of beauty and winning grace like those of Newman and Pusey, voices of decision and energy like those of Hurrell Froude and W. G. Ward; and it is not surprising that they carried men along with them. Still, even from such beneficent and spiritual influences there could not but be reaction; and when it followed that opposition and dissension split the ranks and separated the brotherhood, it was inevitable that questionings and hesitancies should arise. Newman was lost to the Anglican fraternity, and with his secession the whole movement was exposed to misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Storms began to beat against the citadel, and in the minds of the reflective the natural question formed itself, unanswered—at least to their satisfaction—"You talk to us of authority, but where is your authority grounded? Even yourselves,

it seems, are divided upon its claims. Is there, after all, *any* authority that is impregnable?"

Then again, and with a different import, there were voices in the air at Oxford, voices of "men contention-tost." Arthur Hugh Clough, who had at first followed the Tractarians, "like a straw," as he himself said, "drawn by the wind," was among the first to break with their influence. But their parting was a parting of friends. There is nothing of revolt or of violent separation in that breaking up of association which inspired the Oxford poetic movement; and, in bidding farewell to his friend Ward, Clough did so with a breadth of outlook full of hope in the future.

"But O blithe breeze; and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold, where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last unite them there!"

This is certainly not the poetry of scepticism, and Clough's position with regard to the central movement of spiritual ideas has been often misjudged by the thoughtless. His nature was, in fact, one of singular candour, "of Homeric simplicity," as Arnold described it, and he could tolerate in himself no compromise with insincerity. No "light half-believer of a casual creed," he was unable to reconcile himself to the authority of religion, but it was no part of his intention to wage war on that account against those who could. His whole attitude of life was warm and genial. He loved the open air and the healthy life; he

was rich in enthusiasm for the aspirations of his fellow-men; and if he chose to be a law to himself, he was at any rate content to keep that law in strenuous and virile obedience.

" Come back again, my olden heart,
I said, Behold, I perish quite,
Unless to give me strength to start,
I make myself my rule of night:
It must be, if I act at all,
To save my shame I have at call
The plea of all men understood,—
Because I willed it, it is good.

Come back again, old heart! Ah me!
Methinks in those thy coward fears
There might, perchance, a courage be,
That fails in these the manlier years;
Courage to let the courage sink,
Itself a coward base to think,
Rather than not for heavenly light,
Wait on to show the truly right."

Clough's was a downright emphatic nature—typical of many natures that Oxford sends out to do her good work outside her walls—and he expressed himself in downright, emphatic fashion. Technically he is as far as possible from the academic ideal, either in matter or in manner. In style, indeed, he is retrograde; and even the breezy, bounding hexameters, which his friend Arnold so cordially admired, are rather turbulent and compelling than musically persuasive. But there is something particularly winning, friendly, and companionable in Clough's sincere and manly isolation from that current spiritual movement which, could he have gone with it, he would have himself so helpfully adorned. His abnega-

tion of it is remote from all pose or trick of singularity ; it is centred in a spirit that is at one with itself, and open to the world, lending a fresh and emphatic meaning to Tennyson's familiar and often perverted sentiment :

> " There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

When we turn to Arnold we find ourselves face to face with a very different temperament and a different art. In poetic technique Arnold possessed almost all the qualities which Clough lacked, and his workmanship—deliberate and exquisite—is of the highest order of literary finish. His detractors, in saying their worst, could only say that he is an academic poet *in excelsis ;* his admirers, a body which probably now includes all who are qualified to judge of poetic excellence at all, would justly maintain that the classic spirit which Oxford lives to keep alight has here taken to itself fresh fuel, and combined classicism with modernity " on one far height in one far shining fire." The little that can be said against Arnold's method may be said in very few words. It is perhaps arguable that the classic convention led him on occasion into over-elaborate assumption of the poetic attitude. Some of the similes in his longer poems are beaten out beyond the limits of similitude, and present the appearance rather of excrescences than of illustrations. There was, further, a slight tendency to overwork the dignity of classic allusion ; and, as in that fine picture of the Sicilian shepherds in " Thyrsis," to heap suggestion upon suggestion until the poem was only with difficulty drawn back to its English

atmosphere, and the very return to the main theme was affected with a sense of violent transition. These trifling foibles gave his work an occasional air of mannerism, to which some critics, unacquainted, perhaps, with the source of the illustrations and the traditions which they sought to maintain, have not been slow to take exception. But this said, and said with all due reserve, there remains nothing but admiration for Arnold's exquisite manner, and for the delicate felicity with which he elaborates and contrasts effects, whether pictorial or emotional, in language which seems almost infallibly at his command. He sustains the highest traditions of reflective and analytic poetry, and adds to the tradition just enough of modern use and spirit to make his medium recognizable as his own.

In all this he is entirely different from Clough, and he differs from him just as radically in temperament. The cheery vigour, the modulated optimism, springing like a fountain in Clough against the intervention of depression, these have no part in Arnold's composition.

"Say not the struggle naught availeth,"

cries the one; but to the other the struggle, manfully and determinedly as it is undertaken, seems always to be leading into failure and oblivion. "Thou waitest," he says to his scholar-gipsy:

"Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;

For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new ;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah ! do not we, wanderer ! await it too ?

Yes, we await it !—but it still delays,
And then we suffer ! "

This sense of unsatisfied expectation is of the essence of his poetry.

Arnold's life was, perhaps, disposed to this sort of melancholy, for he was thrown much among the less-educated and less-aspiring classes of the community ; and in them, not unnaturally, he seemed to see the failure of the high ideals which were agitating the great centres of culture. " We strive," he might say, " we aspire. These new and exquisite loyalties seem so inspiriting and effectual to ourselves, but look at the majority of our fellow-creatures. What does all our intellectual effort do for them ? "

" What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth ?
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing."

And then, to console themselves for a purposeless and effortless existence here, they promise themselves every form of material and spiritual satisfaction, " hereafter in a better world than this." This was the self-satisfied, smug doctrine of compensation which Arnold could not away with.

" Foil'd by our fellow-men, depressed, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience ! in another life*, we say,
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings ? or will they,
Who failed under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn ?

No, no ! The energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun ;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

The mere recital of that noble sonnet would serve to remind us, if indeed we needed such reminder, that Arnold's dissatisfaction with existing conditions of life and faith would by no means lose the name of action. His melancholy, of which perhaps criticism has always made enough and to spare, was no anæmic plaint of a spoilt child of fortune ; and in purpose, if not in expression of purpose, he and Clough were close-knit brothers. The difference was that each saw, as it were, one aspect of the disease of life, and each prescribed one remedy. To Clough the compensating joy lay in the life of humanity ; to Arnold the anodyne was the life of ideas.

" Sit, if ye will, sit down upon the ground."

says Clough,

" Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look around.
Whate'er befell,
Earth is not hell ;

Now, too, as when it first began,
Life is yet life, and man is man.
For all that breathe beneath the heaven's high cope,
Joy with grief mixes, with despondence hope.
Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief:
Or at least, faith unbelief.
Though dead, not dead,
Not gone, though fled;
Not lost, though vanished.
In the great gospel and true creed,
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen."

He sees the consolation of life in the common emotions of mankind, while Arnold avoids them, to live for cultivation of the beneficent idea alone.

"A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired."

So do the twin-brethren of the Oxford spirit support and supplement one another, until in combination they present the perfect stature of the Gentle Mother's strenuous and cultured son. The ideals for which they stood, and the poetry in which they would have steeped life, did not immediately meet with acquiescence. Clough's reputation was chiefly posthumous, and for years Arnold's favourite depreciation of himself as an "unpopular author" had more than a rhetorical

significance. But in the ideals which they established we seem to see the germ of that spirit which Oxford is diffusing more widely every day; and if it is to the spirit of Clough that we owe more of the University activity against the miseries of the poor, it is Arnold's example that informs the thought of Oxford at home and abroad with a certain reserve towards unproven and ecstatic enthusiasms, but also with a perpetual and growing faith in the permanence of the idea, and in the abiding beauty of the life that sets itself some high ideal, and strives towards it without remission:

> "Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
> Still clutching the inviolable shade."

And this movement, which was at first a reaction from the ecclesiastical movement which preceded it at Oxford, has actually come, with the progress of time, to work in close union with its old dissentient; so that even those who miss in Clough and Arnold just that stimulus of spiritual aspiration which they find in Tennyson and Browning, find in them still its inevitable counterpart, in that intellectual aspiration from which true religion can never be divorced. In Arnold's own words, "we are all seekers still," and the surest consolations of our search are found in those few and dauntless spirits, who, amid "the strong infection of our mental strife," "keep ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, to beauty, in a word, which is only Truth —seen from another side."

IV.—The Poetry of Emotion

The reader who has done me the compliment of following me so far will no doubt have been struck by one prevailing characteristic in which the poets we have been considering are related to one another—a characteristic which lies at the very root of their relation to their art itself. In their attitude to life and its problems they display wide differences of opinion and conviction, but in the method in which they apply their art to the consideration of life they are closely affiliated. And if we try to define this characteristic, we can perhaps best do so by saying that their object is to irradiate life by ideas, to test emotion by ideas, and in all distractions of mood and circumstance to let the idea measure the force of the instinctive sensation, and stand as the final arbiter of its sincerity and value. Poetry, as we know, has been variously defined, and never quite satisfactorily; but it may perhaps be said without fear of grave contradiction that there are three principal aspects of poetry, in the right combination of which the highest form of poetic excellence will be found to consist; while their confusion results in partial and confined attainment, through the presentation of but one side of the poetic quality, or of the different sides insufficiently assimilated. Poetry may deal with three separate activities of the human mind; with ideas, with emotions, and with moods. When poetry is defined as "a criticism of life," the framer of the definition has in mind chiefly the poetry of ideas; when it is described as "emotion remembered in tranquility," the description is

directed chiefly to emotional poetry; and when we are told, as we often are nowadays, that the sincere reproduction of a moment's spiritual experience is the proper concern of the poetic art, this third and final definition applies almost exclusively to the poetry which seeks to reproduce the writer's mood without any reference to its truth or value.

Now, the highest order of poetry will be found, under analysis, to combine elements from each of these three classes, for the emotion, without which poetry is barren, contains in itself an indirect reference to the mood in which it is evoked, while the poet proceeds from the registration of that emotion to test it by the standard of the universal idea. Thus poetry of the highest order is always found, as Professor Courthope has reminded us, to contain both a personal and a universal element; the personality lying in the poignancy of the individual emotion, and in the originality of its expression, while the universal truth is at once appreciated as extending outwardly the borders of the poet's own feeling by its proved applicability to all human nature. For example—to refer for a moment to the poets whom we have already been considering—Tennyson's "In Memoriam" and Browning's "Prospice" are alike poems charged with acute personal emotion; but the conformity of those emotions to a generalized idea, and the universal applicability of their sentiment, lift them out of the range of purely emotional poetry into that of the poetry of ideas, and give them a certain philosophical force of permanent implication. So long, we may say, as man regards with emotion, on the one side,

the death of a dear friend, and on the other, the certainty of his own death, so long he will feel, under certain phases of the idea, as these two poets have felt in these particular poems. Here, therefore, the emotion is irradiated with the idea, and the poetry is raised by it above the levels of circumstance and occasion.

Emotion, then, is of the essence of poetry, but it is also necessary that the emotion should be, as it were, universalized; and for this process a certain remoteness from its immediate influence is obligatory. The mind must be detached from the emotion before it can appreciate its significance; and this is precisely what Wordsworth meant when he said that poetry is "emotion remembered in tranquillity." The writer red-hot with a noble rage, smarting under wrong, may produce poetry of great individual and historic interest, no less than of immense topical influence, but he will scarcely give a final utterance to a permanent truth. Now, the poetry which we have next to consider was poetry of this secondary order. It was a sort of reaction against academic calm and even against philosophic analysis. It was intensely human, sincere, and eager; and in its day it had a broad and humanizing influence. But it was not poetry of the highest ideal, because it was too much in a hurry, too keen to be proclaiming itself at once, and too little remote from momentary sensation. Much of it will never be read without a responding emotion in the reader, but very little of it has that high note of universal truth which is found only with the perfect co-operation of the transitory emotion with the permanent idea.

Of all movements in Victorian poetry this emotional movement is the most clearly defined and traceable; it is immediately referable to political and social causes, and has strongly marked characteristics common to almost all its followers. It is therefore something of a paradox that the one considerable poet which it produced should stand rather outside the general movement, and should be distinguished by intellectual gifts of unusual breadth and vivacity. And yet, when we consider the emotional poetry of the Victorian period, it is impossible to deny that it drew much of its eager vitality and chivalrous sympathy from the tender, womanly example of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. "Headlong" was the nickname which her Italian master gave her in the schoolroom, and headlong was the spirit of the movement of which she was the bright, conspicuous star. She had, indeed, an intellectual foundation firmer and surer than any of her companions; but, when once the inspiration of the cave was upon her, she was as voluble, and at times as incoherent, as ever the Delphic priestess. And the example which she set in the neglect of form was in its day far-reaching and insidious. Her character was so winning, her attitude to life so sensitive and humane, that those who were naturally drawn to her were inevitably entangled in the meshes of her mannerism; and a worse model it would be difficult to choose. Her passion for fantastic and unnatural adjectives, her slipshod licence in the matter of false rhyme and assonance, are as fatal technically as her feminine trick of over-emphasis and hyperbole is distracting intellectually. In the "Sonnets from the Portu-

guese," it is true, she touches high-water mark; but these were inspired by the great passion of her life; and, being deliberately wrought in a restricted form, won her for the single task from almost all her natural extravagances. The rest of her work is technically on a very different level.

Still, even in poetry, technique is not everything; and Elizabeth Barrett Browning very naturally proved a living influence in her day; indeed, much of her work remains, in her own phrase, "humanly acceptive" and stimulating. She was moved less by the immediate interests of the hour than some of her contemporaries in the movement; but, like Sydney Dobell, she was passionately zealous in the cause of Italian freedom, and she shared with James Thomson a yearning sympathy with the suffering and restriction of the working classes. To this enthusiasm we owe "The Cry of the Children"—one of the most vigorous occasional poems in the language.

"They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary';
'Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.'"

The eager sincerity of the feeling rings out above the jarring assonances and jolting metre; and it

is this patent sincerity that gives a haunting charm to almost everything she wrote.

> " What do we give to our beloved ?
> A little faith all undisproved,
> A little dust to overweep,
> And bitter memories to make
> The whole earth blasted for our sake :
> He giveth His beloved sleep."

This wells up from a pure heart fervently ; and the fountain of her verse, troubled as it generally is upon the surface, is often lucid and fresh at its depth.

> " Say never, ye loved *once :*
> God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
> And all our moments breathe
> Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
> For such a word. The eternities avenge
> Affections light of range.
> There comes no change to justify that change,
> Whatever comes—Loved once ! "

This is Mrs. Browning at her best, and here emotion is so nervously felt and expressed as almost to seem transferred into the region of pure ideas. But there is just a little too much protestation, just that rhetorical emphasis of the argument that dulls the edge of poetry. One is reminded of Coleridge's treatment of broken affection ; and, setting the two passages over against one another, one feels in the earlier poet a certain wistful tenderness that rings more true than all Mrs. Browning's earnest eloquence :

> " Alas ! They had been friends in youth ;
> But whispering tongues can poison truth ;
> And constancy lives in realms above ;

And life is thorny ; and youth is vain ;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain."

Perhaps the contrast which these two passages suggest indicates fairly justly the case against the poetry of emotion. Here, once again, " The lady doth protest too much " ; and with a sincere over-emphasis which is nevertheless a violence to art.

This is, indeed, the differentiating characteristic of the emotional movement, which seems to sway with every phase of popular enthusiasm. The Reform Bill, its hopes and disappointments, the Chartists' riots, the conflict of religion and science, the terrors of the Crimean War—all these and many other passing excitements inflame its energy. There are many voices, but the same spirit. The marked characteristics of the movement are great natural energy, expressing itself in language of much vigour and fervour, together with a paralizing incoherence, which sweeps the singer off his feet into wastes of eloquent verbosity. Alexander Smith is a prominent example, and a favourable one as well, for he enjoyed a rich imagination, which he was fortunately able to indulge in luxuriant and often penetrating expression. But his very facility was his bane, for an abundant vocabulary led him into excesses of decoration, and his picture was apt to become a blurred mass of colour.

" Yet Love ! I am unblest,
With many doubts opprest
I wander like the desert wind without a place of rest.
Could I but win you for an hour from off that starry
shore,

The hunger of my soul were stilled; for Death hath told you more
Than the melancholy world doth know—things deeper than all lore
You could teach me, Barbara!"

There is true emotion here, but the expression is flaccid. And that was exactly the fault of so much of the poetry of the kind. Some of its insufficiency was no doubt due to the attempt to translate into poetry radically unpoetic subjects, without enough attention to the necessary art required. Thus James Thomson (B.V.), a poet of perfervid imagination, desired above all things to be an emotional realist, as his own poetical *credo* assures us.

"Singing is sweet, but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.
Statues and pictures and verse may be grand,
But they are not the life for which they stand."

The result, however, of emotional realism in poetry is not encouraging when it lands us in such barren pictures as this of Hampstead Heath.

"Here we will sit, my darling,
And dream an hour away;
The donkeys are hurried and worried,
But we are not donkeys to-day.
Through all the weary week, dear,
We toil in the work down there,
Tied to a desk and a counter,
A patient, stupid pair."

And the two Chartist poets, the two Joneses, Ernest and Ebenezer, become flatulent in political enthusiasm, and commonplace in the affections. Here, for instance, is a Chartist marching song:

" Sharpen the sickle ; how full the ears !
Our children are crying for bread !
And the field has been watered with orphans' tears
And enriched with their fathers dead.
And hopes that are buried, and hearts that broke,
Lie deep in the treasuring sod ;
Then sweep down the grain with a thunderstroke,
In the name of humanity's God ! "

And here is a poem of the domestic affections :

" A pleasant sail, my child, my wife,
O'er a pleasant sea, to many is life ;
The wind blows warm, and they dread no storm,
And wherever they go, kind friends are rife.

But wife and child, the love, the love,
That lifteth us to the saints above,
Could only have grown where storms have blown
The truth and strength of the heart to prove."

Of these the former is turgidly conventional, the latter unaffectedly unimpressive, but they are perfectly fair examples of the poetry of the movement. For when, in the case of Sydney Dobell, the muse takes broader pinions, her flight is uncertain and fitful. Dobell had illimitable ambitions ; in " The Roman " he essayed the cause of Italian liberty, while in " Balder " he sought to follow a human soul in its journey from doubt to faith. But his passages of poetry are intermittent ; and when his emotion runs away with him, he becomes volubly and interminably inconsequent. In him, too, the laxity and incoherence of metre reaches the point of dissolution.

" Our host moved on to the war,
While England, England, England, England, England!
Was blown from line to line near and far.

And like the morning sea, our bayonets you might see,
Come beaming, gleaming, streaming,
Streaming, gleaming, beaming,
Beaming, streaming, gleaming to the war!"

The effect sought here is clear enough to divine; but the effect is far from attainment. Here, as elsewhere, there is quite insufficient consideration of the method which must underlie all artistic representation.

Enough has, perhaps, been said to indicate the nature and restriction of this broad stream of emotional poetry which flowed so turbulently and overpoweringly through the middle of the Victorian period. It found reinforcement from half the unmeasured enthusiasm of the hour, and, being essentially topical in its tone and sentiment, it enjoyed no inconsiderable popularity. To the student of poetry to-day it is chiefly interesting historically. For in a fashion it carries on the Byronic movement, and is itself a symptom of that growing democratization of literature which some of us believe to be a dangerous menace to the future preservation of the literary spirit in England. Fortunately it has not been allowed to pass unchallenged, and the movement which we shall next have to consider vindicated so thoroughly the claim of form in poetry as almost to have obliterated the influence of formlessness from the verse of the present hour. While the emotional movement was at its height, English poetry, despite the unbroken example of Tennyson, was perilously threatened by a wave of lawlessness which, had it spread more widely, must unquestionably have played havoc with the taste

and judgment of the younger generation. But literature is generally justified of her children, and the reaction which followed, a reaction of much art and a little artifice, has restored the balance. Nowadays, whatever the danger of poetry may be, it is at least not likely soon to revert to flaccid metre or sentimental excess.

V.—The Poetry of Reaction and Artifice

An outburst of emotion is invariably followed by reaction, and the course of Victorian poetry did not fail to follow in the common way. It was, indeed, inevitable that it should be so; for, by the time the sentimental movement had spent its force, its own risks and penalties were clearly enough revealed. Even Tennyson had not altogether escaped its influence. The period which educed from him "Enoch Arden," "Sea Dreams," and those other gently emotional stories of domestic life, was certainly the least poetically fruitful in his career, and the homely sentimentality of their tone is directly referable to the literary influences of the time. Poetry was for the moment at an ebb; workmanship and melody had declined, and an attempt to lend vitality to secondary art by concentrating it upon "actual" and popular subjects had resulted in an almost inevitable loss of dignity and beauty. The democratizing spirit was threatening literature, and poetry in particular appeared to be in grave danger. Suddenly the change came, and with it a complete reaction in almost every branch of art. The Pre-Raphaelite movement, with all its subsequent developments and side-issues, was

the salvation of English art. It did a great deal also to save and re-vivify English poetry.

We have seen that the emotional movement had left the field dull and exhausted. There is, no doubt, room for plentiful humanity in what Swinburne called "idylls of the farm and the mill; idylls of the dining-room and the deanery; and idylls of the gutter and the gibbet," but only a consummate talent can lend ideality to the commonplace; and even Patmore's quintessentially poetic temperament could not always raise his subjects above their surface level of homely familiarity. For temperaments less radically artistic the attempt was full of fatal pitfalls. Rhetoric almost homiletic took the place of ideas, and, as the charm of fancy and imagination receded, the art of expression naturally broadened down into thinly disguised prose. Art had suffered in the same school. At the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1858 the most popular picture of the year—a picture which attracted almost unparalleled interest—was a huge, formless representation of a familiar scene in national life, profusely detailed and accurate, but absolutely void of imagination and feeling. The decoration of the ordinary English home accorded no less with this blunted sense of propriety and beauty. Wax-flowers and wool-work; heavy cornices and funereal curtains—all sweetness and light were excluded from the living rooms of the people by these ugly and insincere suggestions of an artificial, tortured life. The new movement struck with one blow at all these false gods of artificiality; brain and eye alike were to be filled with a new sense of freshness and clean beauty. The Pre-Raphael-

ites were to light the lamp of taste in every simple home.

Such were the ideals of the movement of reaction, which early in the fifties began at Oxford, where so much that is true and beautiful has always begun, and soon extended its borders into the whole field of English art. And it is suggestive of many considerations that, though the movement was primarily directed against artificiality, its methods were essentially those of a modified and re-directed artifice. Art, indeed (whatever the logical framer of definitions may say to the contrary), art can never be separated from artifice. The emotional movement had itself been designed to controvert what it believed to be artificial; it sought to return to primary human emotions, and to appeal to the heart of the people through the open and direct channels of popular sentiment. But when it came to the test, sentiment, without the artifice by which alone sentiment can be refined, failed it; and poetry was once more stretching out its hands vaguely towards the evasive light of beauty, "still clutching the inviolable shade." Actuality and the realistic claims of the present hour had landed it in a slough of indecision. "Turn away from these things altogether," said the Pre-Raphaelites, "and lift up your eyes unto the hills. Beauty is not in the present; but it has been in the past. Let us learn the lesson of the past, and return to primitive beauty."

"Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston-stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,

And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green ;
Think that below bridge the green lapping waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne ;
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading—mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes."

The heart of the movement beats in these opening verses. And so Morris leads his readers out, under a canopy, as it were, of apple-blossom, where knights in armour, bound on a chivalrous quest, move over turf jewelled with flowers, to the faint harmony of virginals. It is a pagan paradise, but it is not without manly adventures. The heroes have savage passions, but they quit them like men; and over their life and death Art draws a misty, transparent veil, through which they show like figures in a tapestry, harmoniously melting into the woods and bowers which surround them. So too Rossetti, working rather in colour with the brush, sees the heavens opened, the souls mounting up to God like thin flames, and the haunting sorrow of the happy.

" ' We two,' she said, ' will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

' Circle-wise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded ;
Into the fine cloth, white like flame,
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.' "

Beauty of the form, beauty of the suggestion, and above all beauty of the word—these are the prevailing occupations of the poet. He lingers, with a sort of loving reluctance to be gone, over the " five sweet symphonies " of the names ; and, if an exquisite picture can be painted on the mind's eye, it matters but little to the poet that the impression left proves, on reflection, vague and shadowy.

" Shall I not one day remember thy bower,
One day when all days are one day to me ?
Thinking, ' I stirred not, and yet had the power ! '
Yearning, ' Oh God, if again it might be ! '
Peace, peace ! such a small lamp illumes, on this highway,
So dimly so few steps in front of my feet,
Yet shows me that her way is parted from my way . . .
Out of sight, beyond light, at what goal may we meet ? "

The truth is that this poetry, surcharged as it is with emotion, and trembling under the surface with ideas half-realized, is really neither the poetry of ideas, nor of emotions, but of moods. The poetry of ideas had seemed, from recent experience, to land the thinker in a philosophy too consciously moral to be altogether artistic ; the poetry of emotion had wasted itself in sentimentality over uninspiring objects. And so the

reaction is from both the idea and the emotion to the mood ; the poet's desire is to evoke in his reader a certain mood or tone of mind which is neither active thought nor active emotion, but quiescent, sympathetic resignation to a sense of beauty remote but permeating. In such a mood we neither argue nor ask, but are content to resign ourselves to an effect which is no less compelling in that it seems to evade analysis.

So much, in brief, for the spiritual tone of the Pre-Raphaelite movement ; it remains to say something of what has been by far its most searching influence—namely, its effect upon poetical technique. Mood, tone—the essential qualities of a poet—are not easily assimilated by his followers ; but metrical innovations are common and easy property, and they at once find those who can adapt and imitate them. And it is really difficult to estimate how much modern prosody owes to the reaction from the lax and jog-trot melodies of the emotionalists : because at first sight Swinburne appears to have actually revolutionized English metre. That, perhaps, he did not quite do ; but it is no less true that we owe it principally to him that the technical finish of even the poorest verse nowadays is far in advance of much of the approved poetry of fifty or sixty years ago. Since Swinburne opened the gates of English song to measures which appear to be actually quantitative rather than accentual, the metrical resources of the language have assumed an entirely new complexion. And there is scarcely a living English poet in whose work one may not find traces of the influence of this illuminating

liberty upon the breadth and diversity of current harmonies.

Swinburne has been called " a poet of revolt," and, since a good phrase always sticks, the expression has gained a currency rather out of proportion with its accuracy. For, though his individuality is more compelling and his tone more insistent than those of the two poets we have just been discussing, he is really no more of a revolutionist than his Pre-Raphaelite friends ; his movement is entirely reactionary. To be a poet of revolt a man must have some definite goal, some propaganda, some " programme " (to use an ugly but convenient term) ; but Swinburne has none of these. " I have simplified my politics," said Byron, " into an utter detestation of all existing Governments," and this deliciously-sweeping indignation is very much the extent of Swinburne's " revolt." In reality he reacts, returning, not like the Pre-Raphaelites, to mediævalism, but to classicism, and to the primitive passions of that " noble savage " which he has set up as an ideal of man uncribbed and uncabined by convention or custom. To the young men of his own youth his influence was intoxicating. He seemed the warrior in the " war of the liberation of humanity," who was to free them from the hindering restraint of artificial morality ; they chanted his songs, as later on the Socialists chanted those of William Morris, and they believed that emancipation was dawning. Like other young enthusiasms, that hope has withered in illusion. but it has left us a mass of poetry unexampled in the English language for fertility of music or intensity of lyrical fervour. " The lisp of the

leaves and the ripple of rain" receive onomatopœic expression in his lilting and interwoven harmonies; the melody rises and falls with the mood, till that most formal of measures, the heroic couplet itself, grows billowy with waves of emotion. No such riot of melody exists elsewhere in English poetry, and its influence upon prosody has been the strongest influence of the last half century.

We know, indeed, that historically it was immediate and inspiriting. It was not only that he inspired deliberate and skilful disciples, such as Arthur O'Shaughnessy and F. W. H. Myers, but that his metrical discoveries prompted independent and fruitful research. The publication of "Poems and Ballads" set all young poets in rivalry, to find for themselves new forms matching these revivals of the quantitative glories of the Greek chorus; and it happened that, at the same moment and quite without collusion, a body of poets of the younger generation were turning their attention to French forms of verse, and essaying to fit our less pliable syllables into the dainty feet and rhymes of the rondeau, the villanelle, and the ballade. This movement of the early seventies, which included Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, and even so dissimilar a writer as W. E. Henley, is extremely interesting, not only for its relation to the general effort towards novelty of lyrical resource, but for its own sake and its own achievement. Andrew Lang has written *Ballades*, whose praise is in all anthologies; Mr. Edmund Gosse was the first to use in English the difficult and rolling metre of the *Chant Royal*, and he used it

with singular success; while Mr. Dobson has employed most of the old French forms with inimitable felicity; and has always succeeded in conveying into these decorative measures an emotional sincerity which lifts them altogether above the interests of a merely metrical or artificial exercise.

And, apart from technical questions altogether, this company of poets, together with other of their contemporaries, of whom something remains to be said in the concluding paper of this series, are distinguished as part of the reactionary movement which began in their boyhood, by a certain remoteness from contemporary interests, and by a return to the pursuit of beauty in periods separated from their own. Andrew Lang's allegiance was with the classics, Mr. Gosse's note is of the renaissance, while Mr. Dobson has revived for us the eighteenth century, and permeated its associations with a poetry which criticism has sometimes denied to that period of prose. Finally, it is not a little significant that the most conscious and elaborate poetic artist of our day, Mr. Robert Bridges, is almost exclusively classical in tone and inspiration, modelling himself upon the Miltonic manner and the severely "grand style." But of Mr. Bridges there will be more to say when we attempt a final glance at the present state of poetry and its promises for the future.

It is impossible, however, to part from the poetic movement which we have just been considering without a grateful acknowledgment of its beneficent influence upon the general course of contemporary poetry. It is a movement of divagations, and it has not been without its excesses. But it restored the balance; and through

means which may at times have seemed artificial, it did great and lasting service to art. We are continually told by the critics of the Press that the general level of verse is much higher now than it was, for example, in the old days of the "Keepsakes," the "Amulets," and the "Friendship's Garlands," and the criticism is entirely true. But the poet, no less than the ordinary human child, is born with hereditary advantages. "Other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours." It is comparatively easy for our contemporaries to write well, because others have written so very much better before them; and the history of the evolution of the poetical art in England may well cause some searchings of heart to the easy self-confidence of the younger generation. For, if literary evolution has cause to be proud of her sons, they in their turn can hardly deny that, in precept and example, they are born into a goodly heritage.

VI.—Retrospect and Prospect

The Pre-Raphaelite movement, with its rich and varied train of neo-romantic experiment and association, was the last clearly-defined development in Victorian poetry. Thereafter there was much poetical activity both strenuous and fruitful, culminating perhaps in Tennyson's remarkable volume of "Ballads," in which, at the ripe age of seventy-one, the leader of the singing band revealed himself as ready, like his own Ulysses, to essay new achievements in the very twilight of natural energy. There were not wanting, moreover, certain organized efforts towards literary

departures and revivals, which seemed at times likely to mature into definite and prevailing fashions, but passed away without realizing their own expectations. All these changes are interesting and symptomatic, but their influence was too restricted and their development too early checked for them to take rank with the wide and representative movements which were responsible for the very character and course of Victorian literature.

Looking back, then, for a moment at the changeful field which we have been traversing, we see that these representative movements are closely allied, not only with the development of national thought and character, but also with each other; rolling up, as it were, like waves, and following, not as direct results one of another, but as simultaneous and related consequences of powers and energies underlying and transcending themselves. For, though it has been necessary to treat them in sequence, it must be remembered that all these movements overlap one another, and interact contemporaneously, so that there is an unbroken chain of interest and activity. Doubt and faith exist side by side, presenting the same problem for solution.

" Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where."

Then to the vain hedonism which so often springs from a tired agnosticism, the poet of a stronger faith replies:

" Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;

What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be :
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure."

And so the old discussions multiply with new interpretations, till suddenly another familiar criticism is revived :

" Know thou thyself ; presume not God to scan ;
The proper study of mankind is man."

Then, very much as the Augustan poets followed upon the Metaphysical, there arises a new school of humanistic poetry ; working, of course, on entirely different lines and in an entirely different spirit from the poets of the eighteenth century, and yet having this essential characteristic in common with them, that its interest is human rather than philosophical. Being born, however, in a time of alternating emotions, it soon loses its foothold. The movement, which sprang from sincere enthusiasm and poignant sympathy, dissipates itself in a complete wreck of method and purpose, and Art again takes up its parable.

" Beauty is Truth : Truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Poetry again calls its followers away from all perplexing questions, away from the contemplation of suffering and distress ; again, as so often in the recurring history of art, it points to exquisiteness of form and fervour of mood as the only anodynes for the sick unrest " which men miscall delight." The history of Victorian Poetry is the history of all art ; the same eternal forces underlie it. On the one side the spirit of beauty, on the other the spirit of humanity ; on the one side

Æsthetics, on the other Ethics. By whatever names the two spirits, contending yet allied, may be called, their hold upon poetry and the discussion of their claims in the evolution of art are as old as human effort; and the secret of all literary movements, viewed microscopically, is found to lie in their relation to this perpetual problem.

But while the one main problem—the relation of art and life,—runs, like an undercurrent, beneath all poetical activity, the surface of the art presents from time to time a kaleidoscopic panorama of change and diversity. Nor has the development of poetry been in any sense arrested since the re-assertion of the old truth by the Pre-Raphaelites; on the contrary, the poetry of the last twenty years has presented many interesting phases, and suggested many expectations for the future. There have been, in the first place, various off-shoots of the new romanticism. The little revival of the Celtic spirit in poetry, of which, perhaps, rather too much has been made by current criticism, is a clear, if unconscious, development of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. It shares with the earlier movement the pictorial quality of its imagery, and derives from it, no less certainly, that tendency to vagueness and mysticism which is not always free from the risk of becoming inarticulate. Of the poets of the younger generation few have a truer sense of beauty than Mr. W. B. Yeats, and none have served poetry better, by example, in keeping it clear of contaminating influences. Still, it is possible to forget, in the absorbed pursuit of beauty, that art, followed exclusively for the sake of art, is apt to revenge itself by lapses into over-artifice, and some recent

attempts towards an English school of symbolism have seemed to lack the sincerity without which no living art has ever subsisted. This was always the risk of the æsthetic movement, and it has become clearer in some of its subsequent developments. Just as the emotional tendency overran itself into hysteria, so the purely æsthetic spirit has grown, in certain directions, too deliberately artificial. And directly the artifice is apparent, the work fails in its workmanship. The perfection of art lies in the harmony of subject and treatment, where beauty is so beautifully expressed that thought and expression seem inseparable.

Poetry, of course, can never be the popular form of literary expression ; it is, in its essence, an aristocratic art, and it does well to set up its bulwarks against the advance of democracy. For whenever poetry has been given over to the services of a purely popular movement it has always failed to preserve its dignity. It is inevitably influenced by main currents of thought, but it never espouses the feverish causes of the multitude without loss to itself. But that a certain aristocratic aloofness is by no means inconsistent with absolute freedom from affectation the example of the most distinguished poets of every period abundantly proves. Dignity is the quality of a great nature, but pose is the travesty of dignity in a nature that is small and narrow ; and it is not always easy, at a casual acquaintance, to distinguish the true quality from the false. Students of contemporary poetry, however, have a sound example by which to test the aristocracy of art in the dignified and exquisite poetry of Mr. Robert Bridges. Slightly austere, standing

almost deliberately aloof from popular devices, Mr. Bridges is so refined a workman, so delicate and elaborate in finish, as almost to seem amongst the self-conscious artificers of poetry. But familiarity with his work will assure the reader of its quintessential artistry. He has almost no affectations; his choice of the exquisite epithet is sure and unforced; he is absolutely free from rhetorical effort or showy effect; his work is at once simple and subtle, undemonstrative, and of glowing charm. He appeals exclusively to the trained lover of poetry, and this has kept him from anything like popular acceptation, but he has sustained the classical spirit in a period essentially unsympathetic to classical simplicity, and his example has been highly healthful and beneficent. The sustained example, over a long period of time, of two poets so thoroughly imbued with the classic spirit as Mr. Robert Bridges and Mr. William Watson, has been of very real formative value to the receptive mind of the age, and Mr. Bridges in particular has held to the highest traditions of his art, unmoved by any of those momentary accessions of enthusiasm and indignation which have occasionally tainted Mr. Watson's muse with an infusion of the spirit of journalism. It is a good sign that, after long and honourable activity, crowned with the laurel of public recognition, Mr. Bridges is now beginning to find followers of his own; for Mr. Laurence Binyon, for example, promises to preserve the apostolic succession with no uncertain note. And it is highly important for the future of poetry that the classical tradition—the tradition of dignity and beauty without pose or affectation—should

be preserved from generation to generation, since without it Poetry has considerable dangers to encounter.

The characteristic tendency of the last quarter of a century has been, it must once more be repeated, towards the democratization of literature. The spread of education has evolved an entirely new public, for whom literary interest of some sort or other has to be provided; a public gathered from a class that has hitherto read nothing, for the simple reason that it had not learnt how to read. The temptation is naturally great for literature to direct her appeal towards this vast and noisy multitude; material success, fame, and popularity are, to a great extent, in its hands, and ready to its bestowal. We do not say that there is not still as large and as select a body of admirers of pure literature as there ever was; but it is indisputable that the sudden rise of this infinitely larger and infinitely more insistent public has seriously overwhelmed the voices of literary taste and judgment, and the advantages of the wider appeal are naturally appreciated by the artist. The question is, Will poetry be affected by the popularization of literature? And, if so, what course will it take? Poetry, it is true, is not really to the public taste; but might not, perhaps, some compromise be effected with the austerer forms of art, and by its means a kind of poetry be evolved, which should indeed have its relation to true poetic principles, and yet be at the same time popular in tone and topic?

Some such compromise seems already to have been achieved. When Mr. Rudyard Kipling's vigorous, tuneful, and vivacious "Barrack-room

Ballads" took the world by storm, it is doubtful whether there was a single critic in England who was not more or less carried away by them. Criticism, however hesitating, is generally inclined to enthusiasm over something new; and here was novelty and to spare, breathless, virile, full of high spirits, and essentially British. There was humour, there was real power, there was not even lacking a broken fugitive sense of beauty, as in "Mandalay," which showed that this surprising new genius was not entirely a spirit of fire. But what was really the most characteristic and suggestive quality of the work was its singular adroitness in weaving into the fabric of verse words, expressions, and phrases of the very scum and off-scouring of the language, so that what is rather clumsily called "actuality" seemed wedded to art in a swinging melody which every ear could catch, embodying a sentiment with which every man could sympathise.

"'E rushes at the smoke when we let drive,
An' before we know, 'e's 'ackin' at our 'ead;
'E's all 'ot sand an' ginger when alive,
An' 'e's generally shammin' when 'e's dead.
'E's a daisy, 'e's a ducky, 'e's a lamb!
'E's an injia-rubber idiot on the spree,
'E's the on'y thing that doesn't give a damn
For a Regiment o' British Infantree!

So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
Your'e a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
An' 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air—
You big black boundin' beggar—for you broke a British square!"

No one can be insensible to the *verve* of such a verse as this—to its thoroughgoing vitality, its force, its sense of all-compelling virility. No one can question Mr. Kipling's talent, his individuality, his stake in contemporary literature. But, perhaps, after the passage of years, it will not be reckoned as ingratitude for past pleasure if we begin to appreciate that Mr. Kipling's influence, if it were extended indefinitely, would not be altogether salutary to the progress of poetry. His methods are elementary ; his melodies jingle and jangle ; he does not hesitate (if we may apply a popular phrase to a popular poet) " to play down," when there is a point to emphasize, to all but the lowest of human impulses. Such an influence, popularly accepted, could not be sound either æsthetically or intellectually. Indeed, it starves the higher ideals at the expense of virtues mainly superficial and animal.

It would not be accurate to say that Mr. Kipling has had much direct influence upon current poetry, although it cannot be denied that there are signs that his example is making its way under the surface. Of the purely imitative verse that is issued in such large quantities every year, an astonishingly large proportion is inspired by the Kipling tradition and disfigured by limping travesty of the Kipling manner. Many of the popular music-hall songs—to a vast public the only " poetry " it hears—are modelled on the same fashion ; and, so far as popularity is possible to verse, the author of " The Seven Seas " is unquestionably the popular poet of the time. And, if poetry were now to be democratized, it would certainly be through his example. Indeed the

most democratic note in recent poetry, as embodied in the vigorous talent of Mr. John Masefield, undoubtedly owes to Mr. Kipling's innovation that license in the use of phrase and imagery which often threatens to submerge a very sensitive personality in the sloughs and marshes of bare realism. Without Mr. Kipling's example, Mr. Masefield would scarcely have written certain violent passages in "The Everlasting Mercy," and it may be questioned whether the younger poet has deserved altogether well of his art in the effort to better his instruction.

It is highly improbable, however, that any radical decline into realism will have much effect upon the most aristocratic form for literature; and a reference to the history of poetical enthusiasms in the past does not encourage one to think that an influence of this kind can be very lasting or very penetrating. It is the privilege of poetry that, though its phases are poignantly affected by main currents, it recovers very quickly from purely temporary influences, and that there is never wanting a reaction against any tendency in a perilous direction. What is called the Imperial spirit in politics may be, and doubtless is, the political movement of the future; but it is not a movement that appeals very insistently to the service of art, and it cannot be said to have much affinity with poetic enthusiasm. And the reason that we have not recently undergone any marked poetical movement is undoubtedly this: the ideals and interests of the last thirty years have been so increasingly material that poetry has turned aside from them into contemplation and self-concern. Upon this line there was little

to add to the achievements of the past; and so an air of indecision and vacillating experiment has prevailed, to the prevention of progress. Typical of the uncertain balance of the time, for example, is a poet of the calibre of W. E. Henley, who, possessed of a strenuous individuality and personal force, was yet at one time revealed as an uncompromising realist, at another as an almost sentimental idealist; and who, while he had moods which declared him a modern of moderns, still reserved his most constant loyalty for the ideals of the Tudor period and the adventurous life of the swashbuckler. So, too, Mr. Stephen Phillips, a poet whose early work was marked by much promise and not a little power, ranges indecisively through various fields, and touches at one moment the unrest of modernity, only to turn at the next to a class of poetic drama which, whatever its individual traits, is both in ideal and interest widely removed from contemporary influence. Mr. Alfred Noyes, whose metrical experiments have been among the most interesting features of the younger poetry of the day, suggests very much the same problem. The barrel-organ on the city kerb, or the tired resignation of modern scepticism, are less characteristic of his interests than his frank and frequent plunges into the golden deep of Elizabethan romance. The cares of the present seem insufficiently inspiring, but in the sky above the Muses' Hill there rides "a fleet of stars," where one may still track the course of the giants of old, as their imaginations range from pole to pole.

Under the circumstances of the present time, this tendency to revert from topical themes can

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and a corrective to the feverish energy of its
generation. Even the drums of war are unable to silence this suspicion ; for martial poetry soon wastes its force, and the soul of man retires once more upon some purely spiritual sanctuary. But to follow this path is to venture into the dangerous thickets of prophecy, where criticism is always likely to lose her way. Sufficient unto the day is the evidence thereof !

Victorian poetry, we said at the outset, was neither gay nor buoyant ; but, as a nation grows to maturity, there are more fitting qualities for her literature than light-heartedness and childish vigour. And the poetry we have thus briefly considered should leave us with associations very sincere and very intimate, since it was the expression of natures which felt deeply and saw far. As life grows more complex in a crowded community, its expression becomes naturally more nervous and intricate ; and, of the many moods to which a modern man is subject, there is perhaps none which he will fail to find reflected in some quiet corner of the poetry of his time.

of poetry all that contem-
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FICTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE history of the novel during the past century differs from the histories of every other form of literature in one important particular. In poetry, criticism, and the drama literary tradition was established and crystallised long before 1800; henceforth there might be developments and side issues, but the dominant principles of these arts could scarcely be disturbed. With the novel the case was entirely different. Narrative fiction has indeed played its part in English literature from the beginning, and from Malory and Sidney to Nash and Defoe had brought forth noble names and glittering performances; but it was not until Richardson published "Pamela" that the modern novel of character found a home in England; and English fiction, as we understand it to-day, was but sixty years old at the opening of the century. Sixty years is, indeed, a long period in the age of the individual, but in the history of literary development it is still a part of childhood, and at the outset of our inquiry we find the modern novel no more than beginning, as it were, to find its feet. The period was one of great interest and movement. The forces of the French Revolution, spreading themselves on this side of the Channel, were arousing fresh intellectuality. Literature was no longer to be the privileged possession of Wills' and White's; it was to be democratized for the advantage of a new and imperative public. The

drama had declined; poetry had suffered for nearly a hundred years at the hands of artifice; the sudden stream of ideas demanded some new form of expression. What more natural than that the popular taste should swoop down upon that actual and nervous art in which Fielding and Smollett had already pictured contemporary life with such vigorous fidelity? The demand was for humanity, the study of ideas in life; and it was satisfied in the modern novel.

With the very commencement of the century the novel assumes its two main aspects, developed in two separate talents of radiant excellence; for the first names to meet us are those of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. It has indeed been the singularly good fortune of the modern novel that, with all its traditions to make, it has made them at once, without hesitation or false start; and the first names of the present century are among its greatest. The genius of Jane Austen is without spot or blemish. Standing, as the truest artist will always stand, outside her characters, she looks them through and through with piercing infallibility. Her field may not be as wide as universal nature, but it includes almost every passion in the heart of man, and she regards the changeful and unstable emotions of humanity with kindly satire and critical sympathy. Moreover, she set a brilliant and most healthful example to her successors. Sweeping away the sentimental and sensational methods of Mrs. Radcliffe, Charlotte Dacre, Agnes Musgrave, and the crowd of folly, she wrote with clear and nervous restraint the record of actual life. Side by side with her stands Scott, the father of modern romance. With him

prose-fiction was a second love; and in his abandonment of verse as the vehicle of his Scottish romances, we see more clearly the gradual tendency of narrative towards a prose expression. "Waverley" appeared three years later than "Sense and Sensibility," and with its immediate and overwhelming vogue the fiction of the nineteenth century was blossoming from every branch. Chivalric, humorous, adventurous, humane, Scott revived the national interest in history, and perpetuated the manly types of the middle ages. His fingers may not be always closed upon the pulse of motive, his exuberant imagination may sometimes play havoc with proportion, but the gorgeous procession of heroic figures and noble escapades sweeps through his pages in a pageantry of splendour. And he, too, with his pervading popularity, cleared the ground of pinchbeck sensation and elementary melodrama.

Scott's vogue in the novel was even greater than in poetry, and the glamour of Byron soon took the town by storm, almost obscuring the glories of "Marmion" and "Rokeby." It was natural that the Byron movement should affect the novel too, and the "bigoted and truculent dandies" were not to leave fiction untouched. Nowadays we do not greatly read the stories of Benjamin Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton, but in their day they were immensely popular. Composed half of vain foppery and half of incisive wit, they rose above the level of their surroundings in moments of individuality, but oftener sank beneath it in over-decoration and efflorescence. They remain interesting rather as a picture of the time than as a contribution to literary development.

The influence of Scott, which they momentarily diverted, has long outlived them. In England it lingered on in the turgid tales of William Harrison Ainsworth, and is always reappearing. In France it assumed new vitality in the dashing talent of Alexandre Dumas, whose spirited and illimitable imagination was second only to that of his great English master, and followed very close upon his prowess.

Meanwhile, the gradual but widening influences of the English novel were issuing in a genius peculiarly popular and essentially British. The democratization of literature reaches its apex in Charles Dickens, who has been perhaps the most powerful and permeating literary influence of the century. It is no wonder that he should have been so; for he is the sublimation of the Victorian citizen. In that marvellously diverse and luxuriant genius of his, the sentiment, humour, optimism, fear, and aspiration of his time find complex and sympathetic expression. He possesses, as Taine perceived, the talent of a representative English painter; his energy for detail is equalled only by his wealth of interwoven colour. Above all, he has sincere and impeccable appreciation of the ideals and prejudices of the ordinary Englishman; he embodies his age, and expresses it with admirable and sensitive particularity. If his sentiment is sometimes drowned in sentimentality, his humour marred by grotesquerie, these are, after all, the foibles of his time. He takes a quality or a vice and works it into a character; the leaven spreads till the character is no longer a human being, but an embodied tendency, like one of Marlowe's Deadly Sins.

But it was precisely thus that the early Victorian conscience was played upon most readily; he knew his public, and he filled it to the full. The spirit of Dickens permeates the literature of his time. With natural qualifications, it reappears in Lever, in Lover, in Samuel Warren, in Douglas Jerrold, and even in Marryat. A sudden wave of high-spirited middle-class optimism, drenched in a foam of caricature, overwhelms the coast; for ten years fiction is almost entirely given over to the dominant genius of Dickens.

There was bound to be a reaction, and in due time it came, starting apparently upon the Continent. Early in the century Stendhal had prepared the way for it, microscopically analysing the passions through a glass of superficial naturalism; and now the movement of modern realism centred itself in the similar, but divergent, talents of George Sand and Honore de Balzac. In George Sand, idealist with her gaze upon reality, the inspiration passed from a passion for social enthusiasms to the study of humble and idyllic humanity. In Balzac, realist with a heart of romance, it took the form of eager but laborious examination of motive, an examination wide in its humanitarian sympathy, and conducted by a student of mankind, whose actuality was always illumined by broken shafts of imagination. The talents of the two writers were diverse, but they pursued the same aim. Life was to be viewed, as under the eye of Jane Austen, with uncompromising fidelity; sentimentalism and buffoonery were to be set aside; the heart of man was to be displayed naked and without shame. And so in England. That easy-going conception of the order

of things which ended every novel with lovers united in marriage, and the prospect of illimitable progeny, was suddenly shocked and revolutionised by the voices of two women from a country parsonage. In Charlotte and Emily Brontë the passions were suddenly revealed, romantic, sombre, and importunate; life was pictured as a stormy midnight scene under flashes of fitful lightning. And the world had scarcely made up its mind how to treat this sudden apparition of feminine revolt, when another sensation swept it off its feet. William Makepeace Thackeray was no novice in letters when "Vanity Fair" sprang into the light; but it was only then that he was discovered as an invigorating and disturbing influence. He was, indeed, no revolutionist; but, if Dickens was the child of his age, Thackeray was its critic, and the false sentimentality of the time found itself one morning wittily rebuked by an acute and cynical study of nature. Thackeray is a very complex figure, difficult to fix, and harder still to analyse. By no means the cold cynic he has been sometimes represented, he stood rather as the sympathetic spectator of the follies of the day, removed from them by intuitive wisdom, yet always presenting to them the geniality of a tender critic and candid friend. He modelled himself on Fielding, and inherited something of his master's art both in construction and in presentation; but he was related always to his time, and has left us the most permanent picture of its characteristics. He, too, was followed by a school, not of imitators, but of disciples. In Charles Reade, dauntless opponent of social evils; in Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Craik, conscientious

and intimate observers of simple life; and in Anthony Trollope, the voluminous painter of the English country home, the determination to see things as they are, and to portray them without prejudice, survived and flourished with the ordered grace of a British garden. In America, too, the same flowers of sincerity and charm were growing. The genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne, incomparably the first of American novelists, combined in a rare degree the qualities of realism and romance, and sustained true observation side by side with imaginative fervour and idyllic susceptibility. The tradition thus maintained has done much to protect the modern novel from a decline into permanent eccentricity.

Such quiet methods, however, were not to remain unchallenged, and the search after truth of motive and accuracy of delineation has gone far since Thackeray. Upon the continent Balzac was followed by Flaubert, and in England " Adam Bede " was the successor of " Vanity Fair." In " Madame Bovary " and " L'Education Sentimentale " the new realistic movement joined hands with naturalism. Middle-class life was depicted, not with the genial hopefulness of Dickens, but with all its angularities emphasised, its false gods upon the hearthstone. In " Adam Bede " a like elaboration of detail, laborious but selective, showed that the English mind was not unaffected by French method. George Eliot was, next to Dickens and Thackeray, the most prominent talent of her age, and in her own day she enjoyed both the privileges and the perils of a literary prophetess. By nature a woman of exquisite sensibility, rich and distinctive in emotional

power, she grew, with the increase of her reputation, too self-conscious an artist and too deliberate a preacher. But her influence was broad and humane; it served its time well with fidelity to life and sincerity of purpose, and her earlier books will outlive the sense of weariness from which the recollection of her later assumptions of philosophy has scarcely yet broken free.

Up to the death of George Eliot it is possible to trace a certain clear course of development in the novel, to follow certain inter-related and interacting movements. But the literature of the last twenty years of the century is still too close to us for criticism to say precisely whither the modern novel with its multifarious interests, is tending, or what is to be its next predominating development. Indeed, during those last twenty years the activity of our novelists has been so increasingly complicated and confused that it becomes difficult to believe that any main current exists among the "shorn and parcelled" waterways. A few conspicuous figures, however, stand out in high relief. George Meredith sustained, with noble integrity of aim, the best traditions of the novel of character and national life, irradiating his stories with the sense of vigorous vitality, and preserving in them the unity of purpose and the animating psychological idea, which are the infallible signs of sound workmanship. Mr. Thomas Hardy, like George Eliot the historian of bucolic life, interpreted the heart of primitive humanity in its intimate relation to the heart of nature. For culture, seriousness, and distinction of style, Mrs. Humphry Ward must also be counted among George Eliot's successors. The

mantle of romanticism fell on no unworthy shoulders when Robert Louis Stevenson was still among us, and the enthusiastic will believe that there are not wanting, among the younger generation, talents that promise to fill his vacant and lonely throne. Nor has the increase of political and imperial responsibility lacked literary expression. Few novelists have taken the field with so instant and far-reaching a success as that which has acclaimed the peculiarly British vigour of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's soldier-stories. He is, indeed, the most conspicuous figure among the newcomers of the last decade; emphatic, impetuous, militantly aggressive, he has given voice to the contemporary passion for national acquisition and international power. A modern of the moderns, his is the trumpet-call of the young ambition of his time; its possibilities and dangers alike are clearly mirrored in his stirring talent. For the rest, the most representative fiction of the time has probably come to us from abroad. In Turgenev and Tolstoy we have learnt to appreciate a realism, not naturalistic, but sincere, filling the stage with figures of infinite variety and complexity; and employing all these figures to the development of a central and dominant idea. This movement is seen to be as nearly as possible simultaneous throughout Europe, and in certain countries it assumes a shape both menacing and uncouth. In Scandinavia it emerges in the militant enthusiasm of Bjornson: in France it splits into two channels, following a course of unselecting, laborious exactitude in Emile Zola, and in Guy de Maupassant issuing in a cynical humour, an exquisite manner, and an underlying melancholy

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both touching and persuasive. In Italy the movement crystallises in Gabriele d'Annunzio, lyrical, impassioned, and unstable, whose characters drift helplessly through a world that has cast away the claims of honour and dignity. And in our own way we, too, in England have had our passing movement of naturalism, tangled and absorbed among a complication of literary interests, half-perceived and early abandoned, but still in its hour sufficiently marked and unfortunately pervading. It has spent itself now, and English fiction seems again to be lost in a very wilderness of indecision. Tacking from topic to topic, viewing nothing steadily or long, tortured by problems of misunderstanding and ignorance, its progress seems for the moment to evade the eye of criticism altogether. Out of all this chaos we can but hope that some unity may come, when feverish emotions have cooled down into enthusiasm.

December, 1900.

THE PARTICULAR COPY

THERE are many orders of book lovers, and it is one of the peculiar privileges of the passion that, wisely enjoyed, it needs absolutely no external assistance. To be a fancier of old china or rare poultry one needs, to start with, a well-filled purse, and unless the china be genuinely old and the feathered fowl unquestionably unique, these pursuits have no further recompense. They stand or fall upon achievement. With the book lover fortunately it is a different affair. To be sure, there are bibliophiles and bibliographers, first editions and coveted "L.P.'s", and the tenth commandment may still be broken in the reading-room of the British Museum by those who have the heart for such rarities. There are some, however (and I like to reckon myself among them), to whom such anxious interests appear a distraction and a snare. And, surely, in any case they are inessential. The secret of a book is not contained in the lifeless thing of leaves and covers ; your Aldine and your Elzevir tell me no more than this handy reprint of the " Temple Classics " ; it is the heart, the heart of the book that I want. I am afraid of your Persian decoration, Rivière, Zaehnsdorf, and Cobden Sanderson! I want a book for my pocket and for the fields. It is a sunny autumn morning ; the young breeze calls me to the open road and the woodside ; there is need of a companion, but he must be, like myself, rough and ready. Plain clothes and an honest face ; and so we start upon our journey.

And yet for every bookman there must be a special form of every book; a "particular copy" which speaks its own language. Only—and here I part with the bibliomaniac—it must be a book that has personal memories, not associations of the catalogue—a book that is "mine by a peculiar right, and by an emphasis of interest mine." Personal association—that, indeed, is the secret of all attraction, even of love. How often we come across an old couple who have lived their life out together; their appearance may be homely, their conversation, to a younger and more buoyant taste, heavy and uninspiring; yet they seem to find infinite resource in one another. So should a bookman stand with regard to his treasures. This very ordinary Herrick—a reprint not sixty years old—why should I choose it before all the *principes* of Great Russell Street? Because it was my "first"; because I remember the morning I first attacked it—a schoolboy home for his holidays; because I know where every poem in it lies, even at what line the page must be turned, and why there is candle-grease across the second verse of "Daffodils," and a broad ugly stain upon the cover. Tiny matters, inconsequent details, and yet the life of one book, and—of one reader. I speak, then, to the humble bookman, who must make up in true affection what he lacks in opulence, and, remembering Chaucer's "Clerke of Oxenforde," I am inclined to believe him the truest student of them all. Are there not, upon the shelves of such a one, a hundred volumes that, like Prospero, he would prize above a dukedom? —books that bring back the savour of the days that are no more. For one it may be the memory

of a twilit window-seat in a grey school-library, a vision of cricket flannels, and pads thrown carelessly aside, a brief half-hour snatched between the fall of a wicket and the ringing of a supper bell. I know *I* have one such book, bartered of the librarian for a new copy, and bearing still its number and its badge! Or, is it an Oxford quad. that arises to the mind's eye, a scudding storm, and a triad of young book-lovers about a fire—cigarettes, pipes, and a voice reading aloud and broken by occasional comment? Or, again, an old book-shop in Holborn, and one standing before it, fingering a much-needed half-crown; a moment's indecision, a plunge into the shadowy recesses, and a rapid departure homewards to devour a treasure more appetizing than the relinquished lunch? There are other "particular copies," too, before which, even with the least sentimental, the eye grows dimmer, the tone more reverent:

> "Because the names upon the fly-leaf there
> Are mine—and hers."

Are not these landmarks also, or, it may be rather, signposts, pointing to the paths we did not take? And it is just as well, sometimes, in moments of over-confidence, to remember the partings of the ways.

But, after all, these are accidentals, and, in spite of memories, the "book's the thing." There may be sentiment and recollection about a yellow novel or a Bradshaw, but to the true bookman it is essential that the memory should be worthy of the book, the book of the memory. And such is the excellent ordinance of the library, that the

two influences generally work together, and the books we love best for memory's sake are apt to be the best, too, in themselves. It was their own haunting and abiding impression that created the memory, and it is still the passage, the line that recalls the recollection. In the very charming poem cited a few lines back, " E. Nesbit " describes, with great felicity, the peculiar fidelity of books—

" You don't find railway novels where you left your Elzevirs."

And what is true of the rare edition is equally true of the " particular copy." In the library, as in the *salon*, one is for ever making new friends; fresh shelves have to be contrived, fresh faces accommodated, but in both alike the old are not only better, but more enduring. Come to think of it, you rarely quarrel with an old friend; momentary flashes of impatience there may be, passing inequalities of temperament; but the accumulated wealth of association and understanding is on the old friend's side, and nothing can really upset it. So it is with books. You go into the study in the dusk; lettering and colour are alike indiscernible; the hand alone can discriminate the form. Yet you know where every favoured volume lies, can pick it from its place, and return into the lamplight without fear of disconcertment. These are the friends one seeks in life, the friends that can always be found.

There is one sort of " particular copy " that one loves to look upon, ventures even to handle, but would scarcely desire to possess. I mean the copy of a great book which belonged to a great man. To one lover of Tennyson, at least, it seemed within the most sacred fitness of things that the

oak which closed upon his majestic features should have closed also upon that copy of Shakespeare from which he read in the moonlight almost in the moment of his death. Thereafter, who would be willing to turn its pages? "Who is sufficient for these things?" And those many volumes, shown in many places under glass, from which the immortals read, which they carried about with them into the lanes and streets of the cities—their sanctity seems actually to justify the very abomination of a glazed covering. One stands before them as before a shrine. These are, as it were, part of the mysteries of the book-lover, and no man, I think, who truly reverenced the great would dare to handle them with easy fingers. They have their message, though, and their consolation. Soiled and fingered, torn, and even singed with the midnight candle, they remind us that the great have, like ourselves, known the charm of the "particular copy," and that the sympathy among bookmen is eternal.

To them, of course, the influence was more potent, in that a book was a rarer possession than it is now, and acquired by more strenuous self-denial. Nowadays everyone can get together a library, and works that had to be sought for diligently in the "shilling box" through many drizzling afternoons of disappointment can now be bought in dainty forms at every bookseller's in every provincial town. One hopes that the plenty will not end in *inertia*, that the facility of gaining *a* copy will not warp the delights of the "particular copy." Certainly, the modern bookman must face the risks of his privilege; three shelves of "classics," all equipped in a single

uniform, can never have the same attraction as the motley regiment—a very Falstaff's army, all shapes, all sizes—which we recruited with so much labour of brain and foot in the winding alleys of our youth. But our inquiry grows too curious, too pessimistic to boot. At heart the bookman never changes. What he was in Chaucer's time he remains to-day; and, whether he repair to Mr. Bain or to Mr. Dent, the pleasures of his pursuit will never greatly vary. Personal possession, personal association—these secrets will attend just as closely upon the reprints of the future as upon the editions of the past; there will still be the same caressing touch upon the fading cover, the same closing of the hand, the same disinclination to lend. For indeed, no man lends the "particular copy"; to ask it of him were to beg too much of even the least selfish of friendships. "My friend," so would he answer, "my very dear friend, I have at your disposal my hand, my purse, board, bed, and a god-speed on the morrow; but the 'particular copy' of my favourite book I have neither for you, nor for another. It speaks to me in a language of its own. 'Tis part and parcel of my life of lives, and, in the dark, expected moment, when my eyes can no longer read its lines, I shall hear it whispering to me in the dusk, and welcoming me from its place upon the other side of death."

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

THE MOOD AND THE BOOK

IT is rather a strange thing—but observation assures one of its truth—that comparatively few people understand that in reading, as in every other pursuit worth pursuing, there is room for the practice of art. Nowadays we are all utilitarian rather than artistic; and it is, perhaps, because so few people know how to read that we are gradually ceasing, as the literary journals perpetually remind us, to be a nation of book-lovers. Every man who knows his letters thinks he can read; and the portly financier who sits opposite you in the railway carriage every morning, deep in columns of stocks, would smile with indulgent contempt if you assured him that from end to end of the year he never reads intelligently at all—reads, that is to say, in the only way that reading is worth while—the only way that leaves an effect beyond the moment. Still, one scarcely expects Throgmorton Street to be literary, and the art of reading would not be worth discussing at all among one's books and bookmen friends, were it not that many of the sincerest lovers of literature seem to miss the full enjoyment that springs from a book chosen to fit a mood, and a mood chiming in exact harmony with a book. The mood and the book! The time, and the place, and the loved one all together! This is the true secret, the true art, of reading, and in its kind its charm is unsurpassable. Only to attain to it is difficult.

All art is a matter of selection; and, above

all things, the art of reading depends on choice. But, just as the maiden in her first season fails to know her own mind, however much she is herself convinced to the contrary, so the untrained reader is ignorant of what he wants, is incapable of choosing the book which he is ripe to enjoy. I know a man, a true lover of poetry if ever there was one, who will go out into the fields on a blue spring morning, and read Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" in the open air, full of the belief that this is the one way to appreciate it. And I believe that nine people out of ten would agree with him; possibly, indeed, they are right. Yet I remain unconvinced. The open country, where "the young lambs bound as to the tabor's sound," with the springing sod beneath me, and the carolling lark above—here is, perhaps, the one place and the one moment in which I do *not* want to read that immortal pæan of spring, in which it seems for the hour unnecessary, for the very reason that it is inevitable. Poetry, said its author, is emotion remembered in tranquillity; if that be so, reading, too, should surely be governed by the same sentiment. To enjoy the portrayal of an emotion, whatever the form of art, we must be for the moment free of it in our own selves. If you are labouring under loss, you do not want to see the *Antigone;* and it is when we are without trouble ourselves that we are best able to sympathize with the less fortunate. Emotion, in a word, works by contrast; and since reading is essentially the arousing of an emotion, it is largely dependent upon the selection of contrasted and antithetic moods. The man who is without a

sense of contrast is without imagination also; and to lack imagination is, intellectually, to be dead already. And in some form or other imagination survives in almost every healthy, working intellect. To look at the thing in its lightest aspect, we all remember Calverley's city clerk at the seaside, how he sat him down upon the yellow sand, between the sun and moon upon the shore:

> "And thought how, posted near his door,
> His own green door on Camden Hill,
> Two bands at least, most likely more,
> Were mingling at their own sweet will
>
> Verdi with Vance. And at the thought
> He laughed again, and softly drew
> That *Morning Herald* that he'd bought
> Forth from his breast, and read it through."

Well, that is the Cockney reduction to absurdity of my little theory of contrast, and it is so violent that it almost seems to wreck it with burlesque. And yet consider the human nature of the thing! Consider how the reader revelled in the familiar stocks; in the railway accident at London Bridge, "whereby many City men were delayed for an hour at the busiest time of the morning"; and how every item gained in relish from the sense that for a fortnight he was free of it all! He chose a homely medium, it is true, but he appreciated the value of contrast; and I am not sure but that he went down to his house justified rather than my friend who needs the chorus of nature about him before he can be at one with Wordsworth!

Of course one does not want to labour the point of contrast; literature is not entirely "allopathic," as Harley Street might say. The mourner

must still return to *In Memoriam*, and the armies of the future will doubtless march into action to the music of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. But that well-worn Greek audience, which fined Phrynichus for moving it to tears, understood better than most of us that man lives by the reaction of moods alone. The child, too, seems to understand it better than a man. In a familiar passage Ruskin declares that, if a young girl is turned loose in a library, she will inevitably choose only such books as are healthful to her. In the matter of girlhood Ruskin was an optimist; and one fears that in these days of "feminine culture" the confidence is a little too enthusiastic. But it is certainly true that boys and girls, running riot among their father's books, do manage with wonderful felicity to pick out the book that suits the mood. Youth has no affectations; it never reads what it does not care about; and it derives immense enjoyment and stimulus from the book that pleases it. Somehow, the richer shelves of maturity do not always seem to add to that pleasure quite in the proportion that they should. It may be that many interests blunt the emotions, that "he who increaseth knowledge increaseth," if not "sorrow," at least confusion, and that when the moods become more complex it is more difficult to find the books that fit them. Certainly, in the art of reading, there are some things that never return, "some first affections, some shadowy recollections," which can never be recaptured. They come like a flood of light across the countryside in spring; every bush and every tree falls into relief, and the wood beyond is woven with mysterious hollows. So, when first the mood and

the book join hands, in the golden spring of boyhood, life seems flooded with new meaning, a great wonder breaks in upon us ; we lift up our eyes unto the hills, and we know that the world is good. And oh ! if only those emotions, those evasive, tremulous moods could be restored to us ! But they pass with the light step and the careless laugh, and the thoughts of man are grey, grey thoughts !

It may be, then, that for pure enjoyment the man of few books is to be envied, just as the man of few moods seems to come most easily through the tangle of existence. But the moods must be strong ; and the books, need one add ? must be of the elect. Perhaps not even a hundred " best books " are necessary to a liberal education : one has known men of natural literary culture who were probably on intimate terms with fewer. For the elect have always their moods ; you never turn to them in vain ; they mourn to you, they pipe to you, you may weep or dance at will. But what is one to say for the dreary multitude of books poured forth every week from these weary presses of Britain, books whose very existence seems staked on the boast that they have no mood for any one ? Worse still are the magazine and the popular pennyworth of home chatter. It is said that the cheap periodical is killing the book in England ; if there is any truth in it, it is a wretched outlook. For the newest form of magazine seems designed solely for the killing of moods ; it snaps its cheap information at you like a pistol, with a " Stand and deliver " intonation which annihilates thought ; it is nothing for two pages together ; it makes mocks and mows like a dancer

in a booth, and it leaves you exhausted without the satisfaction of having been entertained. It is produced by those who lack imagination for the better suppression of imagination in others, and it promises to be fatal to the play of the idea. Promises—but, let us hope, will fail of its effect. Surely we shall not be contented with it for long. It seems impossible that the coming generation will not return upon itself—return, too, to the pleasant pastures of pure literature. The very violence of the change must end in reaction; restlessness cannot be a permanent mood, even with the young. But never more than now was it the duty of those of us who care for literary tradition, and believe in the incalculable power of books to humanize and recreate—never was it more our duty to do what we can to hold to what is restful and sure in letters, and to repress what is restless and vain. Life is made up of emotion; it is by literature that emotion is most subtly aroused. There is the mood, and there is the book. Shall they not work together to the perfecting of the little while that is given us for toil and for enjoyment?

CONCERNING ANTHOLOGIES

IT is small wonder that the number of anthologies should be increased with every season, since the passion for making them, so far from being a merely literary "fad," has its roots at the very heart of human nature. In one way or another, we are all collectors, and the desire to group together in a single volume our favourite passages of poetry and prose is at least as old as the illuminated manuscripts of the monasteries. Moreover, in the generation immediately preceding our own this taste was particularly luxuriant; and the first anthologies of the current fashion may be found in those albums of our grandmothers, of which every family preserves a few, where the melodies of Moore and the lyrical fervours of Mrs. Hemans are engrossed in the neatest and most angular of calligraphy. And nowadays, when everything that is written and collected seems to find its way sooner or later into print, nothing is more natural than that every man or woman of letters should be represented by his or her own particular anthology, as a sort of sign-manual of taste and erudition. The custom has also conspicuous advantages, for even the most capricious collection must needs contain many indisputable jewels, and for these there can never be too many, nor too frequent readers. Nothing maintains the standard of taste so effectually as the currency of a sound and comprehensive *corpus poetarum*, which indeed corrects the judgment by the fruitful use of example, a method which proverbially

excels a whole library of precept. Speaking generally, therefore, it may be said with justice that there can scarcely be too many of these aids to culture, and that the more deeply they penetrate into the leisure reading of the student, the more thoroughly will his appreciation for what is best in literature be fostered and developed.

All this is true enough, but at the same time there are risks and responsibilities. "The anthologist's," says Sir Arthur Quiller Couch in one of the very best of these collections, "is not quite the *dilettante* business for which it is too often and ignorantly derided"; and if (though that is difficult to believe) this sensitive art has ever been treated with derision at all, it can only have been so by the pens of the most casual and unintelligent scribblers. For the art of anthology demands, in fact, the most delicate exercise of the critical faculty; and, if there is anything to be said against its multiplication, the blame must lie rather with the easy and confident manner in which it is sometimes assumed, than with any lack of difficulty in its performance. Ease and self-confidence are, indeed, the very worst qualifications for the task, for the labour of selection and arrangement demands continual application and readjustment of judgment. Nor is it probable that any single anthology was ever prepared which would altogether satisfy a jury of twelve experienced critics; personal predilection and association play so large a part in judgment that there must always be omissions and inclusions which will arouse question. And the chief danger of the anthologist is this, that, feeling the impossibility of satisfying every one, he should be too easily content with

merely satisfying himself, without testing those predilections and discounting those associations which are always menacing sound criticism. For it must be remembered that there is a real responsibility in giving to the second-rate the popular currency of association with the first-rate, and that the general injustice which is done to the public taste by obscuring the distinctions of first- and second-rate is even more to be considered than the individual injustice which may be done to a doubtful writer by excluding what might possibly have passed muster under a rather generous latitude of choice. Caprice, whether of choice or of rejection, is the cardinal sin of the anthologist; and it can only be avoided by the persistent application of a high and undeviating standard.

Palgrave's standard, for instance—the measuring rod of "The Golden Treasury"—could scarcely be improved upon. "That a poem," he writes, "shall be worthy of the writer's genius—that it shall reach a perfection commensurate with its aim—that we should require finish in proportion to brevity—that passion, colour, and originality cannot atone for serious imperfections in clearness, unity, or truth, that a few good lines do not make a good poem, that popular estimate is serviceable as a guide-post more than as a compass—above all that excellence should be looked for rather in the Whole than in the parts—such and other such canons have been always steadily regarded." How excellent this is! How comprehensive and how clearly correct in judgment! Indeed, its correctness is so clear that at first sight it may appear to be almost obvious. The

anthologist, we might argue, who sets out with any less appreciation of his task is scarcely to be reckoned with at all. But it is one thing to appreciate a principle and another to sustain it; and any one who is at the pains to follow the vagaries of current criticism, in the periodicals and reviews, will soon discover that even the best judgment is hourly disfigured by caprices which would scarcely be possible, if a sound standard of excellence were inculcated in anthologists, and maintained by the traditions which they subserve.

In the task of selection, it must be remembered, an author may reckon either historically or absolutely; and this is what Palgrave meant when he insisted that a poem must be considered in its relation to its writer's genius. There may be, for example, a poem of Milton which would serve as the highest standard of selection; but it is not, therefore, to be argued that every poem by every other writer which falls short of that standard is excluded. This, indeed, is sufficiently clear; there is but one Milton, and, in his own peculiar excellence, he is unsurpassed. But there are results of this principle which lie less on the surface. It follows that there may be, and are, poems of Milton excellent in relation to the great body of English poetry, but less excellent as measured by Milton's own high-water mark, which are less worthy of inclusion than other poems by writers of inferior capacity, who count historically in their relation to the development of English verse. And it is here that the exercise of the anthologist's judgment becomes most sensitive; it is here that the dangers of caprice are most insistent.

Take Gray, for example; he is, indeed, a

typical difficulty. Gray lies midway between the artificial magnificence of the Augustan poets and the radiant simplicity of the Lake School; he echoes the one and heralds the other, and he is not free from the defects of both. But the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" counts for an immense influence historically, and in its relation to Gray's genius it counts for everything. To exclude such a poem from a representative anthology, on grounds of homeliness of sentiment, would be as grave a caprice as to write off the "Rape of the Lock" from the records of poetry because of its over-decoration and mythological artificiality. Each poem is unsurpassed of its class and period, and in both cases class and period alike were fruitful of poetic progress. And yet a good deal has been said by a certain school of æsthetic refinement for resigning the "Elegy" to the ranks of mediocrity.

This, then, is what one means by the caprice of the anthologist; and it is even more harmful for what it includes than for what it excludes. For the public taste is, or ought to be, largely influenced by the *imprimatur* of a popular collection; and every inferior piece, which such a collection preserves, tends to debase that taste. It must be remembered, too, that the general taste is naturally vicious, and that in these days of rampant journalism it is vitiated more and more every morning by the perpetuation of false standards. The inferior piece, once admitted, is by the persistency of natural selection fastened upon at once for favouritism; and half the influence of the good is dissipated by the bad. There is an admirable collection of the love-poetry of the

language, edited by a living poet of distinction and judgment, which, nevertheless, contains one piece of unquestionable inferiority, both technical and spiritual. This is, in fact, but a single blot upon a brilliant page; and yet, such is the persistency with which poetry avenges herself upon false selection, that one frequent student of that little volume can regretfully declare that he never opens the book without lighting upon the one inferiority, and never closes it without its recollection remaining. So may one pitted speck in the garnered fruit rot inwardly and corrupt the taste!

But the art of the anthologist does not end with selection. There remains the important matter of arrangement; and this is, perhaps, the most generally neglected. The easy method is that of historical succession; but it is by no means the best. Indeed, to see its abuse in full swing, we have only to turn to Professor Arber's laborious series, in which each volume is supposed to represent the era of a single poet, with the result that the whole series overlaps and intersects with bewildering intricacy. Here, again, Palgrave set a rich example, though one beset with difficulty to a less abundant capacity. The poems in "The Golden Treasury" are arranged with a sense of continuity and interrelation so delicate that the taste passes from poem to poem with perpetual refreshment and stimulation. Palgrave's critical faculty and sympathy are here shown at work upon a method which many critics would pass over as unimportant, but which in effect lends to the best anthology in the language a harmony of note and sentiment unapproached for charm and

significance. And as the field for selection widens, it is to be hoped that this method may be revived and perpetuated. For by this juxtaposition of interests one poet is made to illustrate another, one poem to strike fire from its neighbour, and the splendid continuity of English verse is displayed in its perfection.

Here, indeed, is the peculiar merit of the anthology; it shows us that the poet stands, not alone, but as one of a goodly company, separated, it may be, by circumstances of time and event, but united in the maintenance of literary tradition and national character. And there are many poets who show to greater advantage as members of a band than as disconnected units, many whose value and influence are best appreciated in relation to their universal brotherhood. To indicate that value and influence, and to trace the harmony of poetic development, are the principal tasks of the conscientious anthologist. Then, while his work preserves the harmony, what a rich and inspiriting companion it makes. The day of the literary worker should, if it is well arranged, include, in its modest way, an hour for most things that have the literary interest at heart; and there should always be an hour for the companionship of the anthology. And, if a "personal view" may be held to justify a personal confession, it may, perhaps, be added that one eager reader of every new anthology has found for himself an hour when its charm is never-failing. For the crowded hours of the day's work we need, perhaps, more actual interests; literary history, literary criticism, the great creations of fiction and the drama, move with us through the period of busy activity,

suggesting, instructing, enlarging the active and practical sympathies. But when the stir of the working day is over, what calmer and more penetrating pleasure has literature to offer her children than the silent hour, by a dying fire, with some treasure-house of English poetry open upon the knees? Old influences begin to stir in the broken light; old ideals awaken from the fluttering pages.

> "The old earth rings with names that cannot die;
> The old clouds come to colour in the sky."

Spenser, Drayton, Drummond, Carew, Herrick, Crashaw, Vaughan, Collins, and Gray—the Golden Pomp of English Poetry passes before the tired eyes. Here is the majestic form of Shakespeare, at ease in the shadows of Arden; blind Milton touches once more the organ-stops of eternal music; Dryden's "twin-coursers" sweep by in a panoply of triumph. And so to the open fields with Wordsworth, to the glimmering waves with Coleridge, to the dizzy height of the lark with Shelley: we taste in an hour all the joys of Nature, and are made one with her illimitable voice. Visions and voices like these make pilgrimage with us through the darkness, and call us to fresh hope and energy with the expected morning.

SKETCHES FOR PORTRAITS

RICHARD CRASHAW

THE fate of St. John the Baptist has overtaken many of his disciples, and there is something at once noble and pathetic in that true service which is content to act as a fore-runner, and to leave the fruits of its labour to those that come after. Much of the best work of the world has been done in this way. As Moses leads the children of Israel through the wilderness, but is himself denied his entry to the promised land, so John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord, but dies in prison before the revelation of immortality. And history affords many such beaconing figures—pioneers of a larger hope, who saw into a future whose privileges they were not to share, although they themselves had spent their lives in making the world ready to receive it.

Some such halo of promise and unfulfilment invests the poetry of Richard Crashaw, establishing its author as a type of very penetrating interest. He stands, as it were, lonely in a crowd ; the fore-runner of movements, literary and religious, which have since grown into dimensions he could never have conceived. The main facts of his life are fairly familiar. The son of a Puritan divine, he was drawn, while yet a Cambridge undergraduate, into the " High Church " renascence which centred round Laud :

" Poor grey old little Laud,
Dreaming his dream out of a perfect Church."

When Cambridge was handed over to the Parliamentarians, Crashaw was ejected from his fellowship at Peterhouse, and fled to Oxford, then even more than later, the last home of "lost causes and impossible loyalties." There he sheltered for a while; but with Naseby came the break-up of all that he held most sacred. He crossed to Paris, and changed his religion with his country. Rome received him gladly, and in her service he spent what was left to him of a short and troubled life. He died at the Loretto Monastery in his thirty-seventh year.

Alike in life and literature, he holds, as it were, an intermediary position. He was the only one of the English religious poets of his time to leave his own Church, and his attitude is an inevitable reaction against the sweeping changes of the Reformation. He was a mystic and an ascetic, for whom the Church of England at that hour had but little sympathy or consolation. He is the first of that brave and earnest company, of whom Wesley and Newman are by different paths the most conspicuous leaders, and for whom the Anglican Church must always feel a chastened regret. In literature also he marks a new departure. He was born during the last years of Shakespeare's life, and while he was yet a boy the magnificent chorus of Elizabethan poetry began to fade away. The golden years of inspiration were over; poetry was no longer the breath of the atmosphere; artifice was henceforth to take the place of art. In a word, the artist had almost inevitably to become self-conscious; in place of a style that was of the essence of his work, he had once more to make a style for himself.

So among the poets of the seventeenth century, Crashaw may be called the first deliberate "stylist," and the debt which his successors owed to him was indeed immense. Milton would seem to have borrowed from him; Pope certainly did so with open hands; Young drew largely on his sacred poems for his own "Night Thoughts," and Coleridge admitted frankly that Crashaw's "Hymn to St. Teresa" was rarely out of his memory when he was writing the second part of "Christabel." His influence has extended, indeed, into our own time, and no reader of Francis Thompson's poetry can fail to see that it is often modelled with singular felicity upon Crashaw's jewelled lines.

So much may be said very briefly for Crashaw's place in the progress of poetry; meanwhile the work itself invites the full attention of the curious. It is in all essentials the natural poetry of a pioneer. Its faults, and they are serious, are the faults rather of its artistic isolation than of any radical defect in the poet himself. He was, we have said, breaking new ground; he was by stress of influence forced out of simplicity, and the natural result was that his style became vitiated with conceits. Some of these are, indeed, intolerable; there are times when he seems deliberately to defy bathos and to outrage taste. His lines upon Our Lord's choice of a sepulchre, for example, are tortured with ingenuity like a riddle.

"How life and death in Thee
Agree!
Thou hadst a virgin womb
And Tomb.
A Joseph did betroth
Them both."

And no one, of course, can forget the couplet, pilloried by Mr. Edmund Gosse, as "perhaps the worst lines in all English poetry," in which the Magdalen's eyes are likened to :

"Two walking baths, two weeping motions,
Portable and compendious oceans."

Such vagaries are unspeakable : but Crashaw has had to answer for them long enough. They are largely due to an effort, excellent in intention, but often thwarted in practice—an effort towards originality of literary expression. There are many of them, indeed, in Crashaw, but there are many more beauties : and, when at his best, Crashaw is as simple as the purist could desire :

"Thou with the Lamb, thy Lord, shalt go,
And wheresoe'er he sets his white
Steps, walk with him those ways of Light,
Which who in death would live to see,
Must learn in life to die like thee."

Or, if secular poetry be preferred, there is the familiar "Wishes," so often mutilated by anthologists, with its cumulative and haunting reiterations :

"Life that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes say—Welcome, friend!"

Or, "Love's Horoscope," one of the finest love-poems in the language :

"O, if Love shall die, O where—
But in her eye, or in her ear,
In her breath, or in her breast,
Shall I build this funeral nest ?
While Love shall thus entombed lie,
Love shall live, although he die.

THE FATE OF THE FORERUNNER

It is the fate of the pioneer that the credit generally goes with his followers, who march over his work into fuller fruition. We see Crashaw, on his knees, " under Tertullian's roof of angels, there making his nest more gladly than David's swallow near the house of God " ; and we forget that he is the forerunner of that small but devoted body of English Churchmen who roused religion from the apathy of the eighteenth century into the strenuous and sincere anxieties of the last fifty years. But here, as in the music and rich metrical diversity of his poetry, he was a pioneer of good things, the fruit of whose labours was that other men should enter into them. Self-abnegation is the essence of the Christian creed, and Crashaw's Christianity made full trial of its obligations. He is one of those figures of whom it is well to be reminded, upon whose gentle and serene influence it is profitable to reflect. For it is they who, asking little for themselves, make plain the ways of life and of art before the feet of progress.

GEORGE HERBERT

IT has been the happy privilege of the Church of England, out of her own spirit of sweet reasonableness and moderation, to train from time to time a band of men who, while they are nurtured on her own essence and educated in her special precepts, become in turn the strength, the support, the very embodiment of her principles and doctrine. "That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain." And the strength and support of that branch of the Catholic Church militant in our own country has always lain upon the middle way; it has never been her method either to "waste in passionate dreams," or to protest overmuch with the voices of prophecy or denunciation. To say this is not to presume to deprecate the excellence of those kinds of enthusiasm which are congenitally foreign to the English character. The rapt absorption of the mystic, the perpetual adoration of the saint, must be objects of reverence to every branch of the faithful; but such spiritual detachment is probably peculiar to races in which the natural atmosphere is more highly charged with the elements of romance and imagination. In the same way, the fervour and fiery eloquence of a John Knox, great and effectual weapon as it is upon its own field, would seem more attuned to a national temperament in which the powerful assertion of individuality, and the delight in the spoken word, are more insistent than they can

ever be in their appeal to our milder and more equable disposition. The Church of England, when she has been content to speak with her own voice, has spoken more directly than the mystic, and more temperately than the enthusiast. When one thinks of the Church of England, quietly leavening the land through the gentle operation of the ages, one pictures, as it were, a broad stretch of meadowland, rich and mellow in the light of sunset, with here and there among its bowery hollows the heavenward-pointing spire of the village church, and, close beside the yew-trees in the grave-yard, the grey walls and open porch of the country parsonage. Here, as the cattle wind homeward in the evening light, the benign, white-haired parson stands at his gate to greet the cowherd, and the village chime calls the labourers to evensong. For these contented spirits, happily removed from the stress and din of conflicting creeds and clashing dogmas, the message of the gospel tells of divine approval for work well done, of light at eventide, of rest and refreshment for the weary. For them God is not in the earthquake or in the fire, but in the still small voice.

And among these typical spirits, fixed stars of a quiet faith, no figure stands out more brightly or more memorable than that of George Herbert. So firmly does he fill the imagination, so fully orbed does his character appear, that it is difficult to realize that he died in his fortieth year, having tried and tested so many of the human emotions. For this is the special appeal which Herbert makes to the ordinary layman ; typical English churchman as he was, he was first and foremost a man ; he had plunged into the life of pleasure before

preferring the life of self-sacrifice. It has been objected by some critics that of all Walton's *Lives* the life of George Herbert rings least true, that there is an air almost of sanctimoniousness about it, which seems assumed for the purposes of the occasion ; that, in short, it is just a little conventionally insincere. One may question so sweeping a criticism, and yet admit that Walton overpaints his picture. He never knew Herbert personally, and he wrote in the atmosphere that pervaded the finished life. He described his subject, therefore, as saintly from his boyhood, which he was most certainly not ; as moving always towards the priesthood, whereas he was for years an adroit and pleasure-loving courtier ; and, finally, as living out a life consistent from the cradle to the grave, while, as a matter of fact, the most winning and human of all his characteristics was his bitter abandonment of the bright attractions of the world, an abandonment not effected without many searchings of heart and much pain of conscience. Under the coming hand of death he gave the MS. of his poems to his friend Duncon with this free confession : " Sir, I pray deliver this little book to my dear brother Farrer, and tell him he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my master : in whose service I have now found perfect freedom." And this was no fashion of speech. It is the peculiar charm of his life that that peace, " which passeth all understanding," was not attained without a full experience of the conflicts by which the pilgrim's progress is commonly beset. George Herbert did not fear God for nought.

He had come to the foot of the cross by the way of Calvary.

For the main outlines of his life Walton still remains the chief authority; later research has corrected a few facts and recast the interpretations, but for Herbert's later years in particular Walton's rich and humane picture will always endure as a masterpiece in portraiture. It was on the third of April, 1593, that George Herbert was born in Montgomery Castle in Wales. His father's seat, which Walton describes as "a place of state and strength," and Anthony à Wood as "a pleasant and romancy place," was destroyed under the Commonwealth, but its ruins still stand on a rocky and wooded hill, overlooking broad and fertile meadows. The future poet was the fifth son of Richard Herbert of Montgomery Castle, by his wife, Magdalen, youngest daughter of Sir Richard Newport, of High Ercall, Shropshire, who was in his day accounted the largest landed proprietor in the county. The father is described as black-haired and black-bearded, handsome and brave, but of a somewhat stern demeanour, while the mother was of a singular beauty both of mind and body, a great and good lady, if ever such devoted herself to the care and culture of her children. It was to her that Donne addressed his sonnet of S. Mary Magdalen, and his later "Autumnal Beauty" was also written in her praise. Of George Herbert's own devotion to his mother the *Parentalia* contains many evidences.

> Tu vero Mater perpetim laudabere
> Nato dolenti : literae hoc debent tibi
> Queis me educasti.

George Herbert was only four years old when his father died, leaving his mother with the grave responsibility of educating a large and somewhat self-willed family. Her eldest son, Edward, was then of an age to go to Oxford, and was entered at University College, and it seems likely (though on this point there is some doubt) that Mrs. Herbert removed her whole family to the university city, in order to watch over her eldest boy, and at the same time to give the others the benefit of sound tuition. At any rate, George was taught by private tutors until his twelfth year, when he proceeded to Westminster School under Richard Ireland. Here he made rapid progress with his books, became a King's scholar, and in his fifteenth year was elected to a scholarship at Trinity, Cambridge, where he matriculated on the 18th December, 1609. While still at school he attracted attention by a remarkable, if rather painfully precocious rejoinder to one Andrew Melville, a minister of the Scots church, who had attacked the ritual of the Royal chapel of King James ; and at Cambridge he soon made a name by his pen. In his nineteenth year he contributed two poems in Latin to the collection of obituary verse published by the University on the death of the Prince of Wales, poems full of scholarship and scholarly commendations.

Quod si fata illi longam invidere salutem,
Et patrio regno, sub quo iam Principe nobis
Quid sperare, immo quid non sperare licebat ?

At the same time he was essaying English verse as well, as his letters to his mother prove, and was yet not neglecting his more formal studies.

He took his B.A. degree in 1612-13, became a minor fellow in October, 1614, a major fellow in March, 1616, and proceeded Master of Arts a year later.

It was now that circumstances threw him into touch with the court, and drew him into that relation with worldly pleasure from which he had so hard a struggle to free himself, and upon which he used in later years to look back with so sincere a regret. He was appointed in 1612 Public Orator to the University, having already "showed his fitness for the employment," as Walton puts it, by a complimentary letter to the King acknowledging the royal gift of a copy of his *Basilicon Doron*. "This letter," says Walton, "was writ in such excellent Latin, was so full of conceits, and all the expressions so suited to the genius of the King, that he inquired the Orator's name, and then asked William, Earl of Pembroke, if he knew him. Whose answer was, 'That he knew him very well, and that he was his kinsman; but he loved him more for his learning and virtue than for that he was of his name and family.' At which answer the King smiled, and asked the Earl's leave that he might love him too, for he took him to be the jewel of that university."

This introduction led to considerable results. Herbert was clearly at this time well set up in his own estimation; the favour of the court flattered him; the conspicuous duties of his post added to his estimation in the public gaze; and "the love of a court conversation, mixed," as Walton quaintly puts it, "with a laudable ambition to be something more than he then was," led him step by step into the net of the courtier. For five or

six years, when the King was at neighbouring Royston, Herbert was frequently about the court; "he enjoyed his genteel humour for clothes"; neglected his public duties, and found no little satisfaction in a life of ostentation and pleasure. In those days the King could show his favour to a layman by giving him a religious benefice, and King James bestowed upon Herbert the rich sinecure living of Whitford, which was worth in the money of that time £120 a year, or nearly £1,000 in our own.* With this comparative affluence at his back, he was anxious to leave the university altogether, to travel, and to regain his health (for he had already developed signs of consumption); but his mother, who was always a controlling influence in his life, besought him not to abandon his career for the pursuit of pleasure, and, being a good son, he complied with her wish. It was, indeed, as well, for shortly afterwards the King's death put an end to all his hopes of court preferment, and he was once more thrown back upon his own resources, and upon that deep undercurrent of religious feeling, which had never really failed him as an inspiration.

It is difficult to conjecture how much George Herbert's return to the spiritual life was due to the sudden failure of royal patronage, and how much to his own devotion; but it is vain to pretend that it was at first an easy or a palatable change of front for him. "In this time of retirement" [in London and Kent], says Walton, "he had many conflicts with himself, whether he should return to the painted pleasures of a court

* Dr. Grosart's *Introduction to Herbert's Poems* (George Bell & Sons), p. xlvi.

life, or betake himself to a study of divinity, and enter into sacred orders, to which his mother had often persuaded him. These were such conflicts as they only can know that have endured them; for ambitious desires, and the outward glory of this world, are not easily laid aside; but at last God inclined him to put on a resolution to serve at His altar."

There is some obscurity, as Dr. Grosart has pointed out, about the exact date of Herbert's taking orders, for, although he was appointed to the living of Leighton Bromswold in July, 1625, it would appear that this appointment, like that to Whitford, was of the nature of a sinecure bestowed upon a layman, and that though he was for some years to come engaged in good works, he did not actually take orders until he was appointed to Bemerton in 1630. But at any rate he became prebend of Leighton Bromswold, and at once set to work to rebuild the church. Here at last he had found work to his hand. The fabric was in a ruinous condition, and he wrote to the wealthy landowners in the neighbourhood "witty and persuasive letters" which moved them to generosity. The purses of his own kindred were also laid under contribution, for "he became restless till he saw it finished." In the midst of the work, he suffered irreparable loss in the death of his mother, a blow which affected him so deeply as to endanger his own health and to oblige him finally to resign his posts at the university. He was indeed seriously ill, and betook himself to Dauntsey in Wiltshire, where the mild air was supposed to be especially favourable for diseases of the chest. It was here,

while staying with his kinsman Lord Danby, that George Herbert met his future wife. She was the eldest daughter of Charles Danvers, of Bainton, Wilts., and the match was rather curiously arranged. For, as Walton tells the story, "this Mr. Danvers, having known him long and familiarly, did so much affect him that he often and publicly declared a desire that Mr. Herbert would marry any of his nine daughters—for he had so many—but rather his daughter Jane than any other, because Jane was his beloved daughter. And he had often said the same to Mr. Herbert himself; and that if he could like her for a wife, and she him for a husband, Jane should have a double blessing: and Mr. Danvers had so often said the like to Jane, and so much commended Mr. Herbert to her, that Jane became so much a platonic, as to fall in love with Mr. Herbert unseen." This match, so vicariously prepared, was sealed by a marriage on the fifth of March, 1628-9, and resulted in the most complete mutual affection and happiness. Indeed the gentle humour of Walton's epilogue must on no account be missed; for he tells that, when Mrs. Herbert was married a second time to Sir Robert Cook, she was "his wife eight years, and lived his widow about fifteen; all which time she took a pleasure in mentioning and commending the excellencies of Mr. George Herbert."

Within a year of his marriage Herbert at last took deacon's orders, and was preferred to that pleasant living at Bemerton, with which his name is indissolubly connected. The story of his induction can be told only in Walton's words. "When he was shut into Bemerton Church,"

he says, "being left there alone to toll the bell,—as the law required him—he stayed so much longer than an ordinary time before he returned to those friends that stayed expecting him at the church door, that his friend Mr. Woodnot looked in at the church window, and saw him lie prostrate on the ground before the altar; at which time and place—as he after told Mr. Woodnot—he set some rules to himself for the future manage of his life; and then and there made a vow to labour to keep them."

Alas! the time left to him was but short; his ministry at Bemerton embraced but three years in all. The consumption, which had always threatened him, was slowly making its inroad upon a constitution which had never been other than fragile, and these three years of wise and kindly ministration were always lived under the shadow of approaching death. Much more, however, were they lived in the very essence and odour of sanctity. It is at Bemerton that the world loves to think of George Herbert, the chain that bound him to the world broken, his struggles with inclination and ambition at an end, and his gentle spirit, fenced round with love and reverence, breathing the consolation of the faith in every utterance of a strenuous and eloquent tongue. Walton, with great particularity, sets forth the quality of his teaching, and, simple though it may seem to the more self-conscious theology of our own day, it will be found to explain the English liturgy with a thoroughness that many a more sophisticated preacher might envy him. But, well and warmly as he must have discoursed to his little flock, Herbert had left the days of

personal ambition behind him, and was no longer anxious to repeat the triumphs of the orator. At Leighton Bromswold he had lowered the pulpit to the height of the prayer desk, to the end that "prayer and preaching, being equally useful, might agree like brethren, and having an equal honour and estimation"; and this principle, the exaltation of spiritual devotion, warm as it is at the heart of all his poems, was the essence of his instruction also. For, as Walton tells us, "if he were at any time too zealous in his sermons, it was in reproving the indecencies of the people's behaviour in the time of divine service; and of those ministers that huddle up the Church prayers, without a visible reverence and affection; namely, such as seemed to say the Lord's prayer or a collect in a breath. But for himself, his custom was to stop betwixt every collect, and give the people time to consider what they had prayed, and to force their desires affectionately to God, before he engaged them into new petitions."

The dates of his various poems are uncertain; some of them were, doubtless, written in youth; some again during his time of retirement in preparation for the priestly life; but a great many of them—perhaps, one may even say the greater part of "The Temple"—must have been composed at Bemerton. So much are they become a portion of the literature of devotion that it can be no part of the present rough picture of the saintly figure which created them to submit them to cold, analytical criticism. They have their mannerisms, of course, many of them foibles of their day; such as the strange devices of arrangement and type; such too as the occasionally

tortured and "conceited" phraseology. But they stand in the first place amid the very small body of English devotional verse which is also worthy to be counted among the riches of English poetry. The spirit of the British Church is here.

I joy, deare Mother, when I view
Thy perfect lineaments and hue
Both sweet and bright.
Beauty in thee takes up her place,
And dates her letters from thy face,
When she doth write.

Other branches of the faith have other virtues; there is a diversity of gifts, and God fulfils Himself in many ways.

But, dearest Mother, what those misse,
The mean—thy praise and glorie is.

Here is devotion without ecstasy, faith without vain-glory, love without jealousy. And where in all the literature of the church shall we find a picture like this of an English Easter morning?

I got me flowers to straw Thy way,
I got me boughs off many a tree;
But Thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st Thy sweets along with Thee.

It is the perfect utterance, fitting the perfect hour.

And so in his church, in his study, and in his happy wanderings along the lanes to Salisbury, the three years of his peaceful eventide wore down to sunset. In particular, one must think of him by the country-side, for it was there that he spoke so many kindly words of help and counsel; there that he was most eagerly awaited by the cottage-doors. "Some of the meaner sort of his parish

did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert that they would let their plough rest, when Mr. Herbert's saints'-bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him; and would then return back to their plough." Work and prayer! It is the familiar, well-tried amulet of the soul. And with Little Gidding, where the family of Nicholas Ferrar made a perpetual offering to God of their faith and love, Herbert was a frequent correspondent; "their new holy friendship was long maintained without any interview, but only by loving and endearing letters." And so, when the approach of death was certain, it was to Ferrar that George Herbert sent his precious packet of poetry, desiring him "to read it; and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies."

The lesson of humility—the last and the hardest lesson which man has to learn—was indeed well learnt; the once-proud knees had bowed themselves before the altar; and the spirit was ready for its release.

There are souls that call us to the fierce, tempestuous moments of life, spirits, like Michael's, armed with the sword of the Lord, to do His will upon His enemies. They have their place in the vanguard of the Faith. But there are other souls, no less eloquent of His presence, who come, like Gabriel, with a message of peace and love, and lead us by quiet waters, in the valley of consolation. Of such is the tender, humble, devoted spirit of George Herbert. Three hundred years have almost passed since he laid down the earthly

duties of his priesthood, and the prayer with which he took them up is abundantly fulfilled. "I beseech God," he said, "that my humble and charitable life so win upon others as to bring glory to my Jesus, whom I have this day taken to be my master and governor."

He has his wish: his songs live after him; and like a white lily before the altar of the Eternal faith, the flower of his devoted life

Smells sweet and blossoms in the dust.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

SOME forty years have passed since his death, and Kingsley still holds his own. He is still read, and still preserved, "Every gentleman's library" must have its Kingsley on the shelves. Forty years is not indeed a cycle; but, in the evolution of literary taste, it is at least a generation. The Victorian era is long since closed; its account is cast; and Kingsley remains among its characteristic figures. This in itself is fame.

And yet of all the conspicuous figures of Victorian literature, Kingsley is perhaps the one that has most shifted his ground during the last quarter of a century. His memory survives, and his work is read; but neither his work nor his memory can be said to retain that really effectual influence upon the thought or literature of the present day which it exercised at the moment of its production. The best of his novels "wear well," but they do not wear because of the qualities which he sought most assiduously to instil into them. They are, in short, survivals rather than permanent influences. The stories still charm; their cheery, manly, open-air spirit is still infectious; but there is now a sort of faded glory about them. They are of good fabric, but in a sense they begin to grow "old-fashioned"; and the secret of this old-fashioned savour is precisely the secret of their composition. They were designed for topical uses, and the occasion has gone by; they are all, in the purpose of their design, children of yesterday.

Kingsley, in short, has had to suffer the penalty

of all those who in their time are enthusiastically "in the movement"; the anxieties and the loyalties which inspired him are no longer pressing and importunate. For, although the best of his novels are historic in their setting, their inspiration was always contemporary. Kingsley was alarmed by what he conceived to be the tendencies of the Oxford Movement; he had visions of England handed over, Church and State, to the Papacy; forthwith he must be directing his vigorous fiction to portray the horrors of the Inquisition and the victorious iniquities of Rome. He was alarmed again for the future of the youth of England. Too much speculation threatened to make agnostics and browbent students of the library; and again he is eager to proclaim the glories of the natural man, and the inspiring achievements of the life of flood and field. All these were excellent cries, and they enjoyed a very desirable currency in their time; but the immediate need for them is gone. If we except a few misguided fanatics, no one now imagines that the Pope is in danger of being enthroned at Canterbury; and the admirable service done by English athletes in the war has so silenced the criticism of all the world, that perhaps even Mr. Rudyard Kipling has repented his glib jest of a few years back. The dangers are now far more upon the other side; apathy in the religious life, and excessive adulation of the biceps are far more menacing elements to-day than the perils of "Romanism" and effeminacy. Time has swept away the dragons that Kingsley set forth so valiantly to slay, and his work has to take its stand upon grounds quite other than the

author's original intention. But if the claims of muscular Christianity and the problems of Christian Socialism are now satisfactorily adjusted, it belongs all the more to the fibre of Kingsley's genius that his work is surviving its natural inspiration, and retaining, if not a direct influence, at least a spirit, an attraction, and a "voice" for the present generation. A small talent must inevitably have gone down under the advance of principle, but Kingsley's is far from a small talent; it is a vital and enduring one. And, if we ask what it is that preserves such work, when the moving causes of its production have passed away, we shall probably find the answer in that underlying humanity, that fervent, whole-hearted love of man which beats and quivers in everything he felt and wrote. *Amavimus; Amamus; Amabimus* was the epitaph which Kingsley chose for himself; and there is no such antiseptic to literature as Love. "Style" has been described as the one preservative of literature, and style in its turn is all-important; but there are writers —one thinks at once of Dickens—whose style affords many opportunities to criticism, but who triumph over their style by the dominating sincerity of their love and their humanity. And Kingsley is one of these. Some of his literary machinery is lumbering, and many of his effects are childish, but at heart he is infallibly humane; and not only humane, but a poet. The poetic element in him is perhaps inseparable from the humanity. The two qualities work together, and form the very essence of the man. He was a poet because he loved much, and he loved much because he was a poet.

The actual poetical works of Kingsley form but a single modest volume, and much of that is occupied by "The Saint's Tragedy," which is rather meritorious than successful. But a poetic instinct underlies all his work, and his slender bundle of ballads have taken their place among the most tender and sincere of the achievements of Victorian verse. They have the true ballad note, and a generous share of that "natural magic" which distinguishes a poem from a metrical exercise. "Oh that we two were maying," "The Sands of Dee," "Valentine's Day," and the songs from "The Water Babies," have few rivals in their own line. They will continue to be read and sung as long as ballad-poetry is appreciated in England.

Kingsley, we have said, was a writer with a "mission," and in one sense his "mission" is a little antiquated. But, although he dissipated some of his natural force by engaging in themes and discussions which were outside his native range, and although his work suffered inevitably from the controversial and topical interests which inspired it, there is another sense in which it may be said to have a surviving and vital lesson for all time and for all classes of intellectual activity. For true enthusiasm never loses its power, and optimism, when all has been said, remains the natural attitude of mankind. And Kingsley was a genuine enthusiast and a thoroughgoing optimist. Behind all his vigorous party-cries, his "No nonsense!" his "Our side, right or wrong!" and all the rest of his boyish partisanship—behind all this there is a fine, informing faith in progress and human destiny, which can

never fail of infection. " The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof " ; " God's in His heaven, all's right with the world " ; " Oh, God ! my God ! Thou wilt not drift away ! " This unfaltering and happy faith Kingsley shares with Browning and the Psalmist. The life of the fields which he loved so well, the voices of the wood and stream spoke to him with no suggestion of change or decay ; in every common sight he saw evidence of the brotherhood of nature, and, above all, of the fatherhood of God. " To know that men are brothers," he wrote, " they must feel that they have one Father, and a way to feel that they have one common Father is to see each other wondering, side by side, at His glorious works." This was the secret of his socialism ; it is also the keynote of his work. And work inspired by such a motive has at its heart the two enduring qualities of hope and aspiration.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

THE genius of Christina Rossetti presents both to imagination and to criticism one of the most sympathetically interesting figures in the whole range of Victorian literature; and its interest, for those who care to pierce below the surface of the art and to try to understand the spirit that inspires it, is largely concerned with the sort of struggle or evolution of character which can be seen, as it were, developing in the poetry itself. It is customary, of course, to place her among the Pre-Raphaelites; and by birth, environment, and training, her poetry may be said to have been fostered in the very heart of that warm and glowing movement. Bred in a household where the concerns of art were the daily interests of the family, deeply devoted to her elder brother, and immensely stimulated by his literary aspirations; herself accustomed from childhood to practise the art of her father in the very atmosphere of the renaissance; it was impossible that she should not be drawn into that movement which was the breath of life to the little circle around her. But her actual presence in that circle—the apparition of the shy, eluding, girlish figure in the shadow by the fireplace, listening wide-eyed to the golden dreams of that little company of enthusiasts in the lamplight—suggests at once two rather searching problems in the attitude of woman to art; the one a general problem, the other a particular; and both remarkably illustrated in the life of Christina Rossetti.

To take the general problem first; all who are interested in the feminine character must have noticed that women make unsatisfactory allies in any general, concerted movement. That sense of brotherhood, of community of action, which enables men to sink minor differences of temperament and outlook for the sake of a commonly desired good, is almost entirely lacking in women. They combine very badly; their individual interests bring them into immediate conflict; in a very short while each is off on her own trail, and the common cause is left to take care of itself. And—to pass at once to the more particular problem—the attitude of woman to art is almost always an external attitude. It is natural to the feminine character to care for a thing for the sake of what it produces or effects, rather than for its own intrinsic quality; and, when art comes under her criticism, woman is naturally disposed to ask questions of it, and to look for influences from it, rather than to accept it intuitively for its own sake. Now, Christina Rossetti was above all things else a woman. Femininity was of the essence of her being, and when she was thrown by fortune, first of all into a general concerted movement of men, and secondly into a movement concerned with the very essentials of art, she took, inevitably, the woman's way. Slowly but surely her personality emerged from the general movement; slowly but surely it drifted towards that sort of "criticism of life" which was essentially the very poetic method the Pre-Raphaelites were banded together to avoid. She was a poet, indeed, but she was a woman first; and the predominant influence of her sex asserted

itself emphatically upon every tendency of her art.

And so we are able to trace in her poetry, with really singular accuracy, the steady growth of womanhood and its ideals. She sets out full of the enthusiasm of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood for the beauty and warmth of life. A fresh young impulse, a bright and animated flush upon the face of the world, colour her earlier lyrics with rich and primary tones. With girlhood much of the illusion passes. Experience, looking out upon the world through the eyes of womanhood, sees, as it were, a dim haze, a mist rising from the meadows, the mist of disillusionment and failure. The pleasures of the morning are found to be transitory ; the pomegranates and the wine have lost their savour ; a cloud is over the sun. A critic has very happily compared the world of her poetry to a gentle, bosky landscape, broken up into flowery brakes, with a churchyard in the distance ; and the picture holds good of all her work, with this exception, that as she herself journeys across the meadows, the flowers in the dingle grow fewer, and the churchyard itself looms larger ; till at last she comes to the shadow of the lych-gate, and sits down upon its step, and half her heart is with the " grassy barrows of the dead," and only half (and that lost in remembrance) with the primroses and the forget-me-nots by the stream. In short, the purpose and the meaning of life become her insistent theme, and the love of art, for its own sake, grows inevitably less and less.

She was a woman first of all, and she was content to remain a woman to the end. Her poetry, therefore, has no quality more distinguishing

than its sincerity. It does not strive nor cry: it makes no effort to do anything foreign to its own gentle, tender nature; it accepts the burden of womanhood, and with it the faith, the even, inspiring devotion which is always a true woman's surest weapon. Here, at once, she separates from her great contemporary among women poets, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. For, when we come to inquire why it is that so much of Mrs. Browning's poetry, with its fiery eloquence, and its "headlong" advocacy of cause and reform, proves upon nearer acquaintance so unsatisfying, we are more and more assured that she fails because she is trying to make her poetry do more than it constitutionally can; because she is trying, in fact, to make a woman's voice thunder like a man's. Christina Rossetti made no such mistake in art, permitted herself no such liberties with artistic sincerity. Her devotional poetry is the poetry of a devout woman; not of a Paul, nor of an Apollos. She does not preach; she lays down no lines for others to follow; she simply folds her hands before the altar lights, and lifts her eyes to the rood. And criticism itself grows silent before the prospect of a woman praying.

"Have I not striven, my God, and watched and prayed?
Have I not wrestled in mine agony?
Wherefore dost Thou still turn Thy face from me?
Is Thine Arm shortened that Thou canst not aid?
Thy silence breaks my heart; speak though to upbraid,
For Thy rebuke yet bids us follow Thee.
I grope and grasp not; gaze but cannot see.
When out of sight and reach my bed is made,

And piteous men and women cease to blame,
Whispering and wistful of my gain or loss;
Thou, who for my sake once didst feel the Cross,
Lord, wilt Thou turn and look upon me then,
And in Thy glory bring to nought my shame,
Confessing me to angels and to men?"

The whole humility of the devout soul is here; she is in the spirit with Herbert and with Vaughan.

Strange to reflect how this grey, hooded figure, prostrate in adoration, drew its earliest impulses from the Pagan paradise of mediævalism! And yet not so strange, perhaps, when one remembers the permeating influences of sex upon environment and ideal. For, after all, we have no cold ascetic here, no self-devoted nun who has broken free from the world to dedicate her love and her enthusiasm to solitary service. Christina Rossetti is always in the world, if seldom altogether of it. The flowers and fruit are still bright in the orchard; the dewy meadows have still their morning scent; the bird is still singing in the hedgerow. Only, beyond all these transitory joys:

"Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away—"

beyond them all, yet comprehending them all, the quiet churchyard and the cross upon the spire whisper of a rest and a consolation that promise more than these. And stretching out hands towards the further shore, she sings of Beauty that transcends all types and shadows. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

ROBERT BUCHANAN

THE story of Robert Buchanan's literary life, if it were written frankly and with knowledge, would present a record of as much adventure and emotion as that of any of his own adventurous novels. It started in a spirit of the eighteenth century, and it ran the gamut of almost all the varied interests of the last half of the nineteenth; it joined hands, either in friendship or in combat, with most of the representative writers of the time, and it was above all things the career of a man passionately interested in his fellow-men, a creature of impulse, a child of emotion, capable alike of generous friendship and of equally ungenerous enmity; unreasoning, unreasonable, but often instinctively right, and generally downright and sincere. Judged externally, it would be pronounced successful; for while Buchanan came up to London, like the waifs and Whittingtons of a bygone age, without money or prospects, he passed in his time through most of the phases of popularity and material comfort; he had a hard struggle as a boy, but he enjoyed in his manhood more of the moderate plenty of life than falls to the lot of many men of greater ability and equal industry. And yet his career is one that criticism cannot regard altogether complacently, for Buchanan certainly did not do the good things that at the outset he promised to do; he achieved a great deal, but only a small portion of it was on a distinctively high level. Mr. William Archer has

said that he was "guilty of the most unpardonable sin a craftsman can commit—that of not doing his best." But this is, perhaps, rather too uncompromising a judgment; and we may arrive at a juster estimate by distinguishing rather more carefully some of the issues and necessities of the situation.

Buchanan arrived in London (in 1860), with the romantic confidence of boyhood, "to seek his fortune." He was nineteen years old, the son of a Stafford socialistic missionary, and of Scots descent. He had been educated at Glasgow High School and University, and he brought with him to London a fellow student of the same ambition, the pair having sworn comradeship in the pursuit of literary fame. The story of the early struggles of Buchanan and his friend David Gray is generally familiar. It is the story of privation in a Grub-street garret, which recalls the early misfortunes of Richard Savage, and it ended for one of the combatants in a premature and pitiful death. Buchanan's was the stronger temperament; he lived through the lean years of half-starvation, and overcame the obstacles which bristle about the start of a literary career, and in a few years he was making his way steadily upon the newspaper press. Those, however, who watched Buchanan's career closely were inclined to think that the experiences of those early days in London had set a mark upon him which the circumstances of later life never wholly obliterated. Privation is a cruel taskmistress, and in those probationary years he learnt that to please the public you must provide what the public wants. Material success was essential to one in Buchanan's

position. He had not the provision which might have enabled him to choose the work he would have preferred; he was obliged to write what he could find a market for. And so it was not, perhaps, so much the case that he deliberately did not do his best, as that he fell more and more unconsciously into the habit of working upon lines which he saw elsewhere successful, and in which he knew he could himself succeed most easily. The result in any case was much the same; a true artist was wasted in the necessary pursuit of popular favour.

For the unfortunate part of this compromise with necessity was that it fostered in Buchanan the very defects to which his work was most fatally prone. He was, as we have said, a creature of emotion, and his temperament was always swaying between emotional excesses. When for a moment the balance lay level, he would produce, as he often did in his early career, poems of intense and poignant humanity, genuine and sincere utterances of a man of high feeling and deep sympathy. But the balance was momentary, and with its decline he plunged at once into melodramatic exaggeration. Over-emphasis both of detraction and admiration marred his loyalty to what were often most commendable causes, and in his creative work the same over-emphasis dragged him into lurid and hyperbolical effects which simply defeated their own object. He became the victim of untutored emotion, playing into the hands of the crowd.

And yet he was at heart a true poet, of the vigorous and emotional order. He began to write, perhaps, in an unfortunate time; for the spasmodic,

sentimental, and rather formless poetic movement of the 'sixties was precisely the sort of movement to call out in him the qualities which he most needed to restrain, and he yielded himself readily to its fascination. A natural melodist, he was content with loose and flaccid metrical excesses, and his harmony often dissolves itself into the mechanical jingle of the barrel-organ. A rapid and volcanic thinker, he indulged himself in unshapely diffusions; form became the last thing to be considered; effect, effect, and always effect was the mainspring of his work. Later on, too, he assumed subjects far beyond the range of his imagination, and the nebulous and rather pretentious parables in which he attempted to set forth some sort of philosophy of the divine will are found, on careful analysis, to be often very tawdry and always theatrical. But poetry was undoubtedly his sphere. Here, more than anywhere else, he found expression for the most humane and sincere trait in his nature—his generous care and sympathy for the sufferings of the unfortunate. Here, too, he often wrote with persuasive simplicity and directness. It was in his early poetry that he held out promise richer, alas! than any later fulfilment.

Poetry, however, is a poor staff upon which to support a household; and Buchanan, like so many others, turned in time to the more popular field of fiction. Some of his earlier novels are full of power, even if it is rather crudely employed. "The Shadow of the Sword" is not without taint of his besetting sin; it is over-emphatic and over-eager; but it has fine passages and is marked by open and broad sincerity. "God and

the Man," again, has theatrical faults (indeed, it was afterwards recast as a melodrama); but there are scenes of abounding vigour, and in working up emotion to a fever heat Buchanan was not only adroit, but electrically effective. Still, as time went on, Buchanan's fiction declined in quality more than any other side of his work. As he began to give his attention more and more to the stage, the influence of the theatre affected his fiction to such a degree that one seemed to see in every new novel the process by which it had been hastily recast from a first rough dramatic draft. No doubt, this was not actually the case; and many of the novels which looked like re-adjusted melodramas may have begun and ended their history in their final form of fiction. Still, the pervading influence of the theatre was fatal to good work in the novel, the dialogue became stagey, the effects suggested the footlights, and there was no " conviction " in the whole of the workmanship.

Meanwhile, Buchanan was gaining much popularity in the theatre. It cannot, indeed, be said that he enriched the stage with literature, but he turned out many workmanlike dramas which served their purpose, and were upon the whole healthy and vigorous enough in tone. Sentimentality, a perverted form of his emotionalism, warped some of his effects; and in his adaptations of Fielding and Richardson in particular he imported into the stage versions of the eighteenth century novel a sugary sort of sentiment which was not much in harmony with the virile savour of the originals. On the other hand, he was thoroughly aware of the value of stagecraft, and some of his melodramas,

such, for example, as the adapted "Man's Shadow," were in their theatrical way genuinely impressive. It is doubtful, however, if any of them would stand literary criticism, if printed; and this, it need scarcely be said, is rather a serious consideration when applied to the work of a professedly literary man.

Finally, some reference is demanded to Buchanan's excursions into literary controversy, the best-remembered instance of which is his attack upon the Pre-Raphaelites in the article he called "The Fleshly School of Poetry." Buchanan was, of course, no critic; the violences of his temperament were against him. But he was a tremendous fighter, and he loved controversy, if not for its own sake, at any rate for the opportunity it gave him of venting opinions which increased in emphasis with every outburst of opposition. As a combatant he lacked every grace and chivalry of the lists; urbanity and persuasiveness were apparently distasteful to him, for he lost no opportunity of outraging them with diversities of violence. His attack upon Rossetti was quite without method or stability of judgment; it wounded its victim to the quick, but it probably persuaded no one of its justice. "The Coming Terror," a volume of controversial essays which aroused some interest more than twenty years ago, contains some sensible ideas intermingled with a great deal of indiscriminate buffeting of the air, and this defect is representative of all his critical arguments. Yet his enthusiasm was as generous in praise as it was violent in difference. The consideration of dates renders it unlikely that Buchanan spoke by the book when he said

that he was one of the first to give Browning welcome at a time when all the critical world was contemning him ; but it is at least true that among the voices raised to proclaim a new talent Buchanan's was often among the earliest and the most hearty. His view was not always sound, and the hyperbole with which it was expressed was almost invariably unsound, but he gave encouragement to many literary beginners at a time when they needed it most urgently. Here, too, perhaps the memories of his own early struggles prompted him, and to a better purpose.

We take leave, then, of Robert Buchanan with a sense of kindly and sincere regret. He was a man of real talent and of generous emotion, driven, as we believe, by the force of circumstances to make less of his abilities than might have been made under advantages of leisure and of competency. The struggle of life affects different men in different ways. Some go down under it altogether ; some, but these are very few, rise above it and seem to thrive upon opposition ; others, and these the great majority, compromise with it, and are content to swim with the tide. Buchanan went with the tide and the majority. The compromise brought him success and his reward ; but it would be injustice to his memory to pretend that, under other circumstances and with other advantages, the success might not have been on higher levels and the reward itself more enduring.

GEORGE GISSING

THE true function of the novel is still one of those vexed questions upon which criticism seems constitutionally incapable of satisfying itself. Other problems in literary ethics come up from time to time, as taste crystallises, for controversy and decision; undergo their little hour of hesitancy, and are pigeonholed for future reference; but the question of the whole duty of the novelist is just as open to-day as it was in the age of "Pamela," and "Joseph Andrews." Here perpetually the inextinguishable conflict between realism and idealism—that conflict which began with the birth of criticism and seems likely to survive the taste for creation itself—rages with unabated ardour. Here, alone, in the field of fiction, anything like stability of judgment seems almost unattainable. What should the novel be? What is its proper aim and limitation? Is the novelist to be a preacher, torturing himself to illustrate some dogma or to point some moral; or is he to accept the gentler duty of entertainment, "taking tired people," as Mr. Kipling picturesquely puts it, "to the islands of the blest," and entirely content with his art if he has lured his audience into an hour's forgetfulness of the rush and worry of modern conditions and modern responsibilities? Or, to put it a little differently, is the novelist to interpose between man and his environment some softening veil of fancy; or is he to draw life as he sees it, coldly and with calculation,

sacrificing pleasure to the truth, and telling over and over again a grey, dispiriting story to what must soon become a tired, and perhaps a rather irresponsive world? It is an old problem, and threadbare, but somehow or other time and argument seem to bring us very little nearer to its solution.

And yet the question is really a vital one; for until the novelist has faced it, and decided with which of the forces he intends to range himself, his work is almost certain to lack sincerity and effect. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that that dissatisfying lack of fibre which every critical reader must confess to finding in so much of the well-meant fiction of the time, is entirely due to the failure of the author to get his issues clear at the outset, and to understand the point of view from which he himself regards life and its intricate complexities. Analyse an unsatisfying novel to its radical constituents, and you will always find insincerity at the root of all its evil. Obliquity of vision, confusion of attitude, false sentiment, ill-conceived character, blurred proportion—all these elementary faults of the mediocre novel spring, in the first instance, from the author's own want of literary sincerity. How can a man hope to produce a reasonable picture of our complex and sensitive modern life until he has placed himself in some definite relation to its problems; until, in short, he has himself felt and lived the passions and incidents which he sets himself to describe: lived them, not, of course, necessarily in the actual arena of action, but at least in that fortified castle of the mind, in which sympathy enables a man to beat a friend's

infirmities just as poignantly as he would bear his own. Different men, of course, will bear the same infirmity in different ways; and life, no less than art, has room for its realists as well as its idealists. But no man, it is safe to say, will ever live his life out profitably who has not fought, in his imagination, the battles which others have to fight, in reality, from day to day; and no man will ever issue from the study of books an artist of any power or influence, who has not made his peace with that first necessity of the artist, and taken up his own definite and sincere attitude towards the problems which he has to suggest. Art raises the old cry among her children: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"; and, until the answer is given and the choice made, she will tell them nothing of her secrets.

George Gissing was one of that small body of contemporary novelists whose career leaves no room for question about the sincerity or completeness of their choice. He died in what ought to have been his prime, just at the moment when a long course of comparative disregard and very positive personal discomfort seemed on the point of emerging into high reputation and intellectual ease. For years happiness had been beyond his grasp, and popularity had seemed to evade him. He saw men of much inferior talent pass him in the race for public favour; he knew—he must have known—that only a small concession to popular taste, only a slight deviation from literary sincerity and his chosen path, was needed to place him at once among the vociferously acclaimed, and to bring him affluence and notoriety. But, if the temptation ever presented itself to

him, it was never for a moment entertained. A truer artist, a more conscientious and sincere workman than George Gissing never lived. He made no compromise with fortune, permitted no suspicion of disloyalty to his own ideal. He ranged himself from the outset with those who, out of the very integrity of their point of view, are forced, as it were, " to paint the thing as they see it for the God of things as they are " ; and it was simply impossible for his open and honest nature to paint or to imagine anything else. The last years of his life were gladdened by a growing sense of recognition : even in the glibber forms of journalism it was no longer permissible to speak of George Gissing otherwise than with respect. But he died too soon to taste that fuller approbation which the best of his work is certain to command from all who are capable of appreciating true and vital literature ; he died too soon to enjoy his elementary deserts. And the sense of this permaturity of loss adds an even greyer tint to the atmosphere of a life which, from its start to within sight of the last turn in the road, had more than its share of mist and rain. " The sense of tears in mortal things " was never more keenly felt, or more bravely faced, than it was in this manful, strenuous, and undiverted career of work and sympathy.

It is often curiously instructive to notice how widely a man's first literary inspirations differ from his subsequent development. Gissing, it has been said, drew life as he found it (it is the first truth about him) ; but, before a man begins to write at all, books have always given the impulse towards literary expression. And no one who has

read that warm, keen tribute to Dickens in the "Victorian Era Series," and noticed the intimate sympathy between the older and the younger writer, can doubt that the earliest impetus to literature assailed Gissing from the pages of "David Copperfield" and "Great Expectations." Charles Dickens and George Gissing! Could there be a more complete contrast, if the two are viewed superficially? On the one hand, we seem to see the bubbling, carolling, inveterate optimist, arm in arm with good humour and the spirit of joy, taking the road for himself with swinging gait; and on the other, hugging the shadow, avoiding the crowd, the sad-eyed watcher in the twilight, alert, observant, sensitive, but certain only of the very futility of merriment and illusion. Look below the surface, however, and you find at once a host of resemblances only more astonishing than the dissimilarities. Both, to begin with, inhabited the same world. Both of them knew every street of that decaying, foggy district that stretches north of the Gray's Inn Road towards Pentonville and the ghostly wraith of Sadler's Wells; both of them were at home in the less-known reaches of the East End; and to both of them the people who live in these regions were the people best worth writing about. One of the soundest of Gissing's novels is called "The Unclassed," and in his preface to that book he describes the world that his people inhabit as "the limbo external to society"; the world, that is, of men and women who are neither well-bred and notable on the one hand, nor criminally vicious and irreconcilable on the other; the men and women who bear no "statistic badge," but

are simply members of the vast, striving, toiling, unheroic multitude that makes up the tale of British citizenship. Now, these are precisely Dickens's people, too. He drew them as he saw them, and Gissing, in *his* turn, drew them as *he* saw them. Both men, according to their lights, were realists, and are united, across the wide gulf of almost opposite idiosyncrasies, by their common allegiance to the same literary ideal. The very width of their divergence is only another example of the infinite and consolatory brotherhood of art.

Current criticism has a trick, in talking of the uses of realism in art, which is very misleading and erroneous. It is a habit of critics to praise a realistic artist as one who draws life absolutely naked and in its essentials, and to make it a special virtue in his method that he is supposed to permit no shadow of his own personality to obtrude between his subject and his audience. Whether such a method would, or would not, be artistically sound, is an open question; but, as a matter of fact, it is a question that can never arise, for the simple reason that no artist ever yet drew or wrote, with the least pretension to artistic quality, who did not continually obtrude his own personality in precisely the fashion which a certain class of critic seeks to deprecate. Just as the mechanical reproducer of a picture places between his subject and the plate on which the subject is to be reproduced a sort of screen of fine meshes, which gives value and distinctness to the details, so the literary artist always and inevitably interposes, between his world and the reader to whom he introduces it, the film or screen of his own personality, filtered

through which every separate tone and line takes the colour of his own temperament and sensibility. And the stronger the temperament, the more compelling the art; so that all great and enduring work, however apparently naturalistic, owes its qualities of greatness and permanency precisely to the force and individuality of the man who created it. This would seem a platitude, were it not that it is so frequently contradicted by the current language of criticism.

When once it is appreciated, however, it explains the whole principle of literary creation: explains, too, how it comes that a temperament like that of George Gissing, nurtured upon the genius of Dickens, can yet go down into Dickens's world, with its eyes open, and produce a picture so extraordinarily different, for example, as the world of Waymark is from the world of Micawber and the Jellabys. After all, the worlds are just the same externally. "The long, unlovely street," whose vista melts in everlasting haze, the street of unclean thresholds and rusty knockers, where the milkcan and the newspaper stand out on the doorstep in the damp of Sunday morning, till the bells are chiming for service; when at last a lean arm, clad in a draggled wrapper, thrusts itself, with prehensile clutch round the half-open door, through which a faint suggestion flutters of frowsy hair in curling-pins. So Emma Micawber prepared Traddles's breakfast; so Mrs. Peachey kept house for her complaining sisters. And yet, how different the two worlds appear under the touch of divergent talents! To Dickens, overflowing with pictorial imagination, even the most unideal aspect of a London street was alive with

glow and vivacity. He did not consciously caricature what he saw; indeed, his detail has been proved by cold photography to be unimpeachably true to fact; he only projected himself and his amazing "animism" into everything that came in his way. For him the milkcan was rapping out its demand to be taken in, as the wind shook its loose handle: the newspaper was fluttering to get off into a more congenial corner. And when the woman herself looked round the door, he would find something of homely comfort in the kettle that was singing on the fire beyond, something worthy of maternal solicitude and love in the squalling, neglected infant in its cot upstairs. This, too, was realism, elaborately constructed and observed, but touched to colour everywhere by the intercepting haze of a genial and naturally ecstatic temperament.

Perhaps it is true that, by the time Gissing came to observe the same scenes, it was no longer possible, in the gradually moving give-and-take of literary taste, for good humour and make-believe to gild observation with its genial tinge; and that some sort of change of front was inevitable. One thing at least is certain. Gissing saw the same scenes through the medium of an actually opposite temperament. The ruddy-golden screen was replaced by one, not indeed of impenetrable grey (as some of his critics would have us believe), but at least of almost unrelieved monotone. Where the light fell through it, its rays served only to emphasise the surrounding gloom. In short, as every kindly but intelligent critic of Gissing has told us over and over again, his books make sombre reading. And to

understand the temperament one must know something of the man himself. There are cases, such as that of the purely fantastic idealist, where personal inquiry is not only unnecessary, but impertinent; for here the man's life and his life-work are apt to be so completely separate, that criticism of the latter is likely to be more sure of its ground if it leaves the former alone altogether. But with a talent like that of Gissing, so concentrated, so sincere, and, above all, so constant in the imputation of himself upon the world of his fancy, it is quite impossible to appreciate the work without knowing something of the man and his method. And, as in the case of all true artists, such knowledge only increases our sympathy and respect for the indomitable sincerity of the effort. "Whatever record leaps to light," the work only appears the worthier, the ambition only shows the nobler.

In appreciating the external influences that helped to mould his work, there is happily no need to be unduly inquisitive. He has told us himself all that he cared for the outside world to know, and that is abundantly sufficient to explain his temperament. George Gissing was meant by nature to be a scholar and a recluse; he has all the true bookman's love for the comely volume, all the student's passion for the perfect phrase. He was meant to be happy in a well-filled library among the classics that he loved; his delicate constitution demanded a simple, easy life; his tastes clamoured for repose. Fate, on the contrary, threw him into the arena, to fight with the Ephesian beasts of hunger and privation. For years he lived a life of sordid discomfort, and often of cruel want, toiling against every difficulty

among surroundings bitterly and disastrously uncongenial. In "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," he has given us a poignant, but in no way vindictive picture of that painful period. Since Gissing's death it has been stated that the "Ryecroft" papers were not strictly autobiographical; and if by this it is meant that every separate incident is not a photographic fact, the criticism, no doubt, is true enough. But Gissing himself admitted that the general impression of the book was that of his own life, and that many of the events described were deliberately and carefully restored from his recollections. And indeed, no sensitive reader can fail to feel the intimate "actuality" of the record.

Here, then, we see Gissing as he was, when all the formative influences of life were at work upon his nature. Imprisoned in a London lodging for sheer lack of means to travel; his fancy wandering over seas, while his body was chained to his desk; he was perpetually at work, reproducing a world for which he had at heart an instinctive distaste. Holidays came for other people, but never, in those days, for himself.

"At times, indeed, I seem all but to have forgotten that people went away for holiday. In those poor parts of the town where I dwelt, season made no perceptible difference; there were no luggage-laden cabs to remind me of joyous journeys; the folk about me went daily to their toil as usual, and so did I. I remember afternoons of languor, when books were a weariness, and no thought could be squeezed out of the drowsy brain; then would I betake myself to one of the parks, and find refreshment without any enjoyable sense of change. Heavens, how I laboured in those days!"

The work, he says, was cheerfully undertaken, with a constant determination not to be beaten in the battle of life, but the surroundings were depressing enough to have broken the spirit of many a stronger man.

" I see that alley hidden on the west side of Tottenham Court-road, where, after living in a back bedroom on the top floor, I had to exchange for the front cellar ; there was a difference, if I remember rightly, of sixpence a week, and sixpence, in those days, was a very great consideration—why, it meant a couple of meals (I once *found* sixpence in the street, and had an exultation which is vivid in me at this moment). The front cellar was stone-floored ; its furniture was a table, a chair, a wash-stand, and a bed ; the window, which of course had never been cleaned since it was put in, received light through a flat grating in the alley above. Here I lived ; here I *wrote*. Yes, ' literary work ' was done at that filthy deal table, on which, by-the-bye, lay my Homer, my Shakespeare, and the few other books I then possessed. At night, as I lay in bed, I used to hear the tramp, tramp of a *posse* of policemen who passed along the alley on their way to relieve guard ; their heavy feet sometimes sounded on the grating above my window."

It was among such domestic discomforts as these that " New Grub Street " was feverishly written, in that fine, delicate manuscript with which his correspondents were familiar. He is said to have completed this particular book in six weeks, toiling at his desk for ten hours a day, scarcely speaking to a fellow-creature all the time, and selling his favourite books to second-hand dealers in order to get the wherewithal to buy the simplest food. Here, strangely enough, he followed exactly the experience of the boy Dickens ; but the loss

of such silent companions must have been harder to the man than to the child, more particularly when one remembers that many of these books, like a certain treasured and dog-eared "Tibullus," were bought at the cost of a dinner. For on the day when he acquired this precious volume for sixpence at an old bookshop in Goodge Street, he had to be content with bread and butter for four-and-twenty hours.

Well, at the time his native courage carried him through these distractions with a good heart, but in later years the memory of them hurt him to the quick. One of his friends, Mr. Noel Ainslie, records the fact that there was a certain London lodging-house which Gissing could never bring himself to revisit. "It was an old house with a little balcony, and you can still see it," he said, "as you walk up ——; but I turn my head away whenever I pass the end of the street, for I cannot bear to look at that window." This sort of aftermath of bitterness is, of course, a common experience of the sensitive. Tennyson felt it; so too did Dickens, in a very marked degree. Bitter memories of the kind get burnt into the brain, and every detail of suffering is reproduced even against the will. But this is not the only nor the chief effect of such experience upon a delicate, literary temperament. Every intelligent watcher of life in city streets will have noticed how much quicker and sharper in observation are the children of the gutter than those of the sheltered home; hunger, thirst, and the struggle for survival are wonderful teachers in the school of comprehension. Above all faculties, that of swift and accurate observation of detail seems positively

to be fostered by want and privation; the eye, in search of necessities, becomes abnormally alert, the brain abnormally accurate in registration. Gissing, like so many others who have undergone the same discipline, at once developed this nervous, palpitating faculty. His sense of detail is extraordinary; he notices everything, and notices it with the "lean and hungry look," the sleepless watchfulness of the waiting Cassius. At first he had only to describe what lay around him; but, as his field widened, it was necessary to cover new ground, and in no single detail did he ever trust his imagination. He must see the thing itself, watch it, and record every smallest particle of its development. It is said that he would loaf of an evening in the East End among the barrows of the costermongers, would smoke many a pipe in silent contemplation by the ingle of a beer-house, would spend a night in the gallery of a slum-side theatre, always assiduously observing and gathering "copy." Again, if fuller experience were needed, he would change his lodging to fit the scene of the novel he was writing, hiding now in the lower Lambeth reaches, and again mixing in the mixed society of a Camberwell boarding-house.

"I had a goal before me, and *not* the goal of the average man. Even when pinched with hunger, I did not abandon my purposes, which were of the mind. But contrast that starved lad in his slum lodging with any fair conception of intelligent and zealous youth, and one feels that a dose of swift poison would have been the right remedy for such squalid ills."

Such was the making of a realist; and, while of course it resulted in an impeccable veracity of

workmanship, it is impossible to deny that it had its artistic drawbacks. Gissing's observation was actually too comprehensive, his affection for detail was overwhelming. This is especially clear in the personal descriptions of his characters. He has a trick of enumerating every feature, colour, shape, and suggestion all elaborately recorded; and the effect of such "schedules of beauty" ("*Item*, two lips, indifferent red; *Item*, two grey eyes with lids to them; *Item*, one neck, one chin, and so forth") is not, as Olivia very well knew, to convey the true impression of a face. The true impression is a general one, with some outstanding feature conspicuously marked; and Gissing's elaborate inventories fail again and again to convey any real and abiding picture. The details are too many; they simply confuse the fancy. And this is true of his workmanship in a more general sense as well. His great failing was his want of imagination, and of broad poetic suggestion. He was instinctively unable to contemplate his world on a broad plane; and perhaps the very bitterness of his own experience prevented him from illuminating it with any sort of sustaining philosophy. We shall see this point more clearly when we come to say a word or two upon the inner character of his work; in the meanwhile, it remains as a brooding hindrance upon the externals of his art as well. And in the very beginning it militated grievously against any chance of his popularity.

Realism, of course, has never been popular in England. "That rather narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman" (as Arnold loved mischievously to call him), does not care to be told

too much about the naked truth of things. He likes the downright character; he expects elementary honesty; but he does at least wish to believe that this dear old England of his is quite the best possible country, all things considered, in the best of all practically possible worlds. Now, Gissing's grey and sombre revelations of the true surroundings of more than half the population of the country told him just the opposite of all this; and naturally, feeling uncomfortable under the information, he decided to leave Gissing's work indulgently alone. It happened, therefore—and it is not very much to the credit of our cosmopolitan artistic judgment that this should have been the case—it happened that in France, where realism is indigenous, Gissing's reputation was already among the highest in British fiction before the London libraries were at all disconcerted by any pressing demands for his books. The young French enthusiasts were hailing him as "le jeune maître," and comparing him with Zola, when not even an illustrated London paper had found occasion to beg him to be photographed.

Since Gissing's death, this comparison with Zola has been widely repeated; but it is surely not quite so felicitous as some of the favourite parallelisms of French literary criticism. Certain likenesses do undoubtedly exist. Both writers were avid for detail; both were susceptibly sincere; both surrounded their world with a sort of cloud of honest melancholy. But the intrinsic methods of the two—their cardiac relations to life—were diametrically opposite. With Zola the whole concern of art was the promulgation

of a thesis ; he was, surely, the *enfant terrible* of the " novel with a purpose." Every one of his novels propounds a theme, and the characters in it are arranged, like puppets in a theatre, to illustrate the main doctrine of the story. A novel by Zola may be said to be like a lecturer's celestial globe. It has raised stars upon it, representing the separate units of the firmament ; but the lecturer revolves it in his hands to argue the movement of the whole sphere, and the stars move with the globe, merely as parts of the whole complicated machinery of motion. It is the same with Zola's characters. He revolves the circling ball of his theme, showing every side of it to the audience, but the characters that people the story move only as component portions of the subject, which dominates the whole discourse with a sort of insistent personality. With Gissing the very opposite method is the whole secret of art. He writes, not at all to illustrate a theory, but simply to picture life. With him the characters of his story are the entire concern of the artist. He takes his little groups of people, follows them into their houses, watches them in their daily going out and coming in ; and, like his own Philip Lashmar, " takes to heart all their human miseries and follies, living in a ceaseless mild indignation against the tenour of his age." It is the individual that interests him, not the general movement ; and it is by his wonderfully sympathetic reflections of individual ambition and disappointment that the best of his work will survive its generation. Here, at last, we reach the mainspring of Gissing's art. The training in realistic method which his own hard experience afforded

him, was all the while tending towards the development of this nervous sympathy with suffering which is the true antiseptic of his work. The strength of his art is concentrated here. Whether he saw life whole or not, he at least saw it, through the medium of his own temperament, with amazing steadiness. And all his stories may be said to be animated by the same sentiment, the same "ceaseless, mild indignation against the tenour of his age."

The individual, we have said, is the one interest of his art; but it is always the individual seen through the same haze of temperament. Gissing himself, thrown by circumstances into a life the very opposite of that his taste dictated, moving among the laborious and the toil-worn, with his own inclinations all set towards study and intellectual ease, could scarcely help seeing, in all the world around him, perpetual evidence of the foiled ambition of a striving and ever disappointed humanity. All his experience returned to this truth, crying with Browning:

> "Just when I seemed about to learn!
> Where is the thread now? Off again!
> The old trick! Only I discern—
> Infinite passion, and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn."

Two main complications recur again and again in his stories. On the one hand, there is the cruel disillusionment of the man or woman who is conscious of immortal longings, which a narrow and uninspiring environment is incapable of satisfying; on the other, there is the spectacle of a rich and desired opportunity, suddenly

placed by fate in the path of a character too unstable and purposeless to grasp its own advantage. In either case, there is the same result: a bitter awakening, disappointment, and at the best a resignation which is already on the borders of despair. And in tracing the course of disillusionment the artist spares us very little. In the threadbare lodgings, makeshift homes, and penurious parsonages to which he carries our imagination, the tale of domestic irritability, of the petty jars of conflicting temperaments, of the triturating friction of daily intercourse upon the uncongenial, is told with the very poignancy of truth. The touch is not so much bitter as tenderly regretful; "Oh, the pity of it!" he seems to say:

"The little less, and what worlds away!"

The man himself, as he pictures him in "Rye-croft," is here among his characters, speaking of the things he has known, with the vexed courage of resignation.

"Naturally a man of independent and rather scornful spirit, he had suffered much from defeated ambition, from disillusions of many kinds, from subjection to grim necessity; the result of it, at the time of which I am speaking, was, certainly not a broken spirit, but a mind and temper so sternly disciplined, that, in ordinary intercourse with him, one did not know but that he led a calm, contented life."

But the calm is only a superficial assumption. Underneath it is always surging that "mild indignation against the tenour of his age," mild indeed, but tenderly pathetic, with a sense of lost possibilities and averted hopes. Why, he seems

to say, should this poor, vain girl, decked out in shabby finery, have the soul of a melodramatic heroine in the body of a milliner's assistant? Why should this true labourer in the field of art be forced to debase his talents at the whim of a selfish and frivolous wife; and at last to give his life as well as his ambition to glut a still dissatisfied vanity? Why should all the world be full of the sighing of the prisoners of the soul, who find no respite and no rest in the perpetual seeking for the never-found? And there is no answer but his own inquiry. Why?

And yet, of course, this is not the whole philosophy of life; nor, if the artist had seen the life around him through the medium of a less sensitive temperament than his own, would he have found it to be seething only with sorrow and doubt. The old woman on the farm, who looked over the fence into her pig-sty, and exclaimed with benediction: "Well, I am sure we have all much to be thankful for! God A'mighty might a' made us all pigs!"—this simple philosopher of the backyard was, after all, viewing the situation entirely from her own point of view, and not at all from the pigs'. They, no doubt—good, easy bodies—were well-contented with their ditch, and would have thought the bustling, rattling life of the kitchen and the dairy the very depth of irritating discomfort. Life, after all, has always its double aspect; not every one has his hidden ideals. Those who move amid middle-class English life will readily admit that in many of the uniform and unideal villas of a London suburb there is one member of the family (generally a girl) who has ambitions above her station,

and a capacity for idealism which cannot be satisfied with third-rate dances and mild flirtations in the lecture-room. But for every one such imprisoned spirit, " beating in the void its luminous wings in vain," there will be a dozen plump, contented persons, whom the certainty of roast beef on Sunday, and the possible excitement of a smile from the curate, will abundantly satisfy from week's end to week's end. And, if we go a little lower down in the scale, we know that those kindly philanthropists who establish pleasant and well-ordered " Homes " for the children of the East End tell us continually that the life of the streets is so fascinating and of such rare enchantment to its own sons and daughters, that most of them, after trying the creature comforts of the refuge for a little while, yearn to go back to the old garish lights, and break loose at last to take up again the precarious, exciting odyssey of the street arab. This side of the question George Gissing could not see, because, realist as he was in the practice of art, he was at heart an idealist of idealists ; so truly so, indeed, that he presents but one more example of that singular paradox of the artistic life, which is for ever setting the artist, conscientiously and with every access of sincerity, upon the very opposite path to that to which his inclination would naturally seem to lead him. But the paths join at last. For only one who had a sense of the meaning of things beyond their common implication could draw them as they are. Some " wandering air of the unsaid " must traverse even the most definite and actual of human sayings.

In that exquisite volume of travel, " By the

Ionian Sea," we seem to feel the genius of its author stretching out hands towards the further shore, and gradually assuming that mantle of romance with which his last imaginative piece of work was found to be altogether clothed. In the last days of his life George Gissing was permitted to taste some of that restfulness and ease for which he had all his days longed so tenderly ; and the reflection of this gentle sunset-glow had begun to colour his later work. Suppose the days of comfort had been prolonged, would they have turned his genius to new uses, teaching him some of that easier confidence which the days of tribulation (and they were many) had silenced in a sort of dumb despair ? Who can say ? But, standing with him by the waters that he loved, we seem to hear an unfamiliar echo in his voice, an echo that sounds like a farewell to the streets and alleys he had traversed for so long.

" ' So hard a thing,' he says, ' to catch and to retain, the mood corresponding perfectly to an intellectual bias—hard, at all events, for him who cannot shape his life as he will, and whom circumstance ever menaces with dreary harassment. Alone and quiet, I heard the washing of the waves ; I saw the evening fall on cloud-wreathed Etna, the twinkling lights came forth upon Scylla and Charybdis ; and, as I looked my last towards the Ionian Sea, I wished it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, to-day and all its sounds forgotten.' "

To-day and all its sounds forgotten ! It is the pathos of so much of the artistic life that these importunate sounds can never be forgotten, that they ring in the ears of the artist till the very

melody of the Muses' Hill is drowned in the thundering echoes of the Strand. To-day and all its sounds made up the medley of George Gissing's life, and roll, like a grumbling undercurrent, beneath the surface of all his work. The one thing wanting in that work, indeed—wanting not only to its popularity but also to its artistic perfection—was just an hour's respite from the insistent voices of the street, just a day's holiday, shall we say? among the shepherds upon the Delectable Mountains. And the final note of pathos in his story is simply the suggestion that the hour of respite had arrived, and that the House Beautiful itself was in sight, at the very moment when the rest that comes unsought wrote its cold, inevitable "Finis" across his life and work. The hour of his death seems to fall in cruel keeping with the hours of his life. The ambition was still unsatisfied; the last word was yet to say.

GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL

IN one of his casual letters, thrown off without self-consciousness or premeditation, George Birkbeck Hill has a sentence which sums up the chief enthusiasm of his life: "Blessings," he says, "on those who publish letters and biographies; but a ten-fold blessing on the writers of autobiographies." It is a sentiment which many will echo, but it is much more than that: it contains a clear revelation of the life-interest of the man who uttered it. For Dr. Birkbeck Hill's best years were given to the study of biography; he became absorbed in the interests of other men's lives; and, as so often happens with the man who lives in the company of the illustrious dead, he was able to draw from the experiences and the sympathies of the past a perpetual stream of example and of consolation in the present. And, since the only life that is really worth reading about is the life that is governed by ideas, the result of his whole-hearted concentration was to make his own "Life" peculiarly interesting to all those who, like himself, find the biographies of the true men of history far more stimulating than the adventures of the false men of fiction. Such a story may be singularly free from incident or excitement, but it is absolutely quivering with human interest and sympathy.

The only life worth reading about, we have said, is the life that is governed by ideas. This is a truism, on the face of it, and yet a great many

people fail to appreciate its truth. The majority, we rather suspect, would be ready to estimate the interest of a career by the variety of its changes and chances, taking it for granted that a man whose life was in his hand every day was, in the nature of things, a more attractive figure than one whose conversation was concerned, not with the bugle and the sabre, but remained rooted in those spiritual interests which make their appeal only to the eye of the soul. But never could the majority be more wrong. The breathless adventure, once recounted, has no further charm; it flames and glows a moment in the surrounding grey, and then fades out and is forgotten. But an idea is a permanent thing: it is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; and, however often we look at it, we shall always find some new beauty in it, and some hitherto unrealised suggestion. And what is true of an idea in itself is truer still of the life that is led by ideas. As our experience deepens, we begin to see that such lives as these are alone the influences that make history and mould character. They have the secret of the ages; they "never grow old, nor change, nor pass away."

The life of George Birkbeck Hill was about as simple and direct as any life lived in our tangled, restless generation could possibly be; he saw his way before him early, and never turned aside from it. He was born into a scholastic family; became familiar with books from his nursery days; and lived among books for nearly seventy years. The interests which surrounded him were subject to few vicissitudes. Even before he went to Oxford he had become attached to the gentle and beautiful girl who was afterwards his wife;

their happy married life ended in her death only a few months before his own ; they were enabled to share, in perfect communion, all the simple troubles and consolations of a bright, united home. He had to work hard all his days, and his labours brought him comparatively small material recompense ; yet he was never harassed by difficulties nor subjected to the more bitter privations of the literary career. He lived, too, to see his life's work finished, his great edition of Johnson complete upon the shelves. He had nothing, in short, to look back upon with regret. Is it possible to conceive a simpler life, or one which at first sight, makes less appeal to the imagination ? And yet its record is full of interest, of charm, and of memorable examples. And the whole secret is that the life is permeated with ideas, and illuminated to the last by the high, unchanging lights of intellect.

What strikes one, first and last, in reading George Birkbeck Hill's letters is their wonderful simplicity. At Oxford, where he had to lead austerer and more laborious days than most of us, he writes to his future wife, without a touch of pose or pedantry, a record of the simplest toils and pleasures. He met there some of the most brilliant men of their time—William Morris, Burne Jones, Swinburne, T. H. Green, James Bryce, and Caird—he became their friend and fellow club-man ; but there is not a word in his letters to suggest that the little company took itself seriously :

" Yesterday I had Nichol to breakfast with me in honour of some fowls aunt had had slaughtered expressly for me, and Price took a cup of tea with me

and tried some of my home jam. Later on I went to call upon a Freshman, remembering my loneliness when I first came up, and very well pleased he appeared to see me, as he knew no one."

Nothing could be more natural and unaffected, and this simplicity was of the very essence of his being. It crops up everywhere; when he is over fifty, and crowned with distinction, he seems quite surprised that anyone should be interested in himself or his work. If he meets another writer and is greeted with cordiality, he records it with surprise and gratitude. His gentle, retiring nature is pleased by the compliment, but quite impregnable to flattery or even praise.

This, it need scarcely be said, is the attitude of a man who takes himself at a low valuation, not out of false modesty, but from his own knowledge of the things he does not know. The small-minded man, having achieved one little thing well, puffs himself out into a semblance of greatness. The large-minded man, who may have done many things excellently, looks round upon the immeasurable work of the world and realises the poverty of his own share in it. He lives, in short, by ideas, and ideas save him from conceit. And nowhere do we find the force and value of the intellectual life more clearly shown than in Birkbeck Hill's attitude to the ineradicable sorrow of his life—the death of his little son, Walter.

In the midst of his promise the child was struck down, and the father could find no consolation in the common, human hope. "Now," he said, "I have to face life without him." It is the first and last word of resignation:

"How often as I sit by the fireside, does my eye sadly rest on the part of the floor—how well I remember it—where he quivered and danced with joy as he welcomed me home one winter evening, and clinging to me said in his loving voice and with his caressing ways:

> And will I see him once again,
> And will I hear him speak?
> I'm downright dizzy at the thought,
> In truth I'm like to greet.

If only he shall see me again, and stands on the other shore of the dark water to welcome me! I then shall be the child and he the guide—old in the ways of heaven. But it is a dream."

The strength of a man's character is proved in the moment of its ordeal; many a man passes for strong half the days of his life, only to show his fatal and irretrievable weakness in the hour of trial. The gentle, recluse-like air of Birkbeck Hill might not have suggested to the casual comer the strength and fortitude that lay below it; but here they are revealed in all their ennobling quality. "I will never try to comfort myself with what is false," he said; and then turned his eyes to the sunlight. It takes true character to do that, unsustained by faith and expectation.

But here is the prevailing secret of this quiet, self-contained, and stimulating life. It lived, not by faith, nor by sight, but by the light of the living idea. To make literature serve life; to lighten the burden of existence by reflection upon the infinite suffering of the world; to regard oneself, in all humility, as less than the mote that flickers in the sunlight of eternity; and,

out of that sense of insignificance, to gather—not despair, but the larger and austerer hope: that is the lesson of such a life as this. And the consolations of such a hope have been found to endure.

> "Thank God! that, while the nerves decay,
> And muscles desiccate away,
> The brain's the hardiest part of men,
> And thrives till three-score years and ten."

If only a man can feel that truth, and can work in the light of it all his days, he need never know old age; and death itself may come as a friend in the morning.

TWO HOMES

THE CITY OF BATH

WHEN first I knew Bath—and it was the first town I ever saw with eyes hitherto accustomed only to country lanes—there was no railway to reach it from our own spur of the Mendips, and you drove across the coal-fields of Radstock, by the long high road through White Post, up and down the rough places of Dunkerton Hill, with its lonely clump of dark trees upon the summit; and then, a few miles further on, the hillside city broke upon your gaze, climbing up the side of what we used to be told was the crater of a dead volcano, tier above tier of crescents, and trees and spires. Is it only the tenderness of association, I wonder, that makes me believe that there is no city in England so thoroughly at one with itself in the spectacle it presents to the traveller's eye, so entirely and harmoniously a piece of definite architectural workmanship? Other tastes may acclaim other preferences, but for my part, my loyalty is unshaken.

Bath was indeed happy in the moment of its re-creation; the city, as we know it, grew up within a single century, at the will of a little company of master builders, fertile in taste and fancy. Everyone knows the old legend of Prince Bladud and the husks of the prodigal, of the swine that were healed in the mud baths, and of the Roman city, "Aquæ Solis"—waters of the sun—that grew up with this discovery of those mysterious powers. And the first known map of Bath which

issued from the Heralds' College in the second half of the sixteenth century, shows her then a fortified city of small dimensions, compact within her four gates, with the Avon to the south and east.

But this was not the city that we see to-day—far from it. Hard times settled upon the town during the Civil Wars, the baths themselves lost their repute, and for more than a hundred years scarcely a house was added to the map. And then, with the Restoration, there came changes. Charles II. and his Queen patronised the place; the Court began to talk about the excellence of the waters; and when, forty years later, Queen Anne paid a state visit to "the Bath," the turning-point in the fortunes of the town were reached. There was at once a great influx of fashionable life; the outlying villages of Weston and Twerton had to eke out the insufficient accommodation of the city itself; beds were a guinea a night, and the builders began to think that it was high time to be busy.

Then at last the city of Bath began to rise, climbing the terraced hill towards Lansdown, and using every shelving ridge to wonderful advantage. Crescent rose above Crescent, and Place above Place; on the lower levels Queen Square and the Circus maintained a sort of courtly dignity; on the higher ground there was no room for wide display, and the precipitous street was flanked by rows of stately houses that took, with a natural sense of propriety, the shape of the hill they came to clothe. There was no haste or economy in the building; the houses were not only sound in fabric, but rich in decoration; the frontals finely wrought with pillars

and garlands, the staircases wide and sunny, the ceilings beautifully adorned, the fireplaces tall and graceful; the whole city a place well suited to the fashionable life that was now to flood it with vivacity from Sydney Gardens to King's Mead, and from the Avon to Charlcombe Woods.

Is it sentimentality to feel that what is left of Bath to-day presents to the fond imagination little more than a grey and beautiful wraith of that city of wit and entertainment? The good Bathonian of the present day will indignantly deny the implication, protesting that the place is putting on its festal garb again, with dances in the spring-time and a master of ceremonies all the year round—that the Queen of the West still knows how to reign among her apple orchards and her broken hills. It may be so; but to others the dances of to-day seem like a shadow pantomime, movement without colour, reflection without the heart of life. The streets of Bath, as one traverses them at midday at the beginning of the twentieth century, with their invalids in bath chairs and their retired officers shuffling off to play bridge all the sunny afternoon in the club smoking-room, seem full of ghosts—the ghosts of Beau Nash and his merry men, who gaze upon the pageant with weary eyes, wondering if this indeed is the city of their merry prime. The old spirit has passed from Bath; the old days are done; what is left is a mere shadow of fantastic imagination.

But the city herself is there—a city of the eighteenth century, bland and beautiful, dreaming with her grey stone eyes of the glories of an unforgettable past. Many of her mansions have known what it is to have shop fronts driven into

their carved facades ; some of her chapels have changed into badminton courts and offices, and Beau Nash's private house is now a public theatre. But many more of the old buildings remain refreshingly unspoiled ; the link extinguishers still survive amid the fine wrought-iron work ; the interiors, with their lofty, garlanded ceilings and noble doors, are still unsacrificed to vandalism. Indoors and out the city keeps its old-world face for those who have time to linger and to look for it, and nowhere more than in the long Assembly Rooms, where the towering chandeliers glitter with suggestion of ancient lights, and the floor still shines from the polishing feet of the beaux and belles of a gayer generation.

What a world one can call up, standing in the shadowy vestibule, and looking down the dim and empty hall; what life and spirit of

> " The old Augustan days
> Of formal Courtesies and formal Phrase,
> The Ruffle's Flutter and the Flash of Steel."

Here Mrs. Malaprop grows garrulous over her cards ; there Lydia Languish's eyelashes lift in answer to some quick retort ; and surely that is Captain Absolute by the door, fresh and irresponsible as ever. Shadows of the past, flitting but imperishable ! All memories of my native city are inextricably interwoven with your genial influence. You knew the city at her best, and, when we think of her then, we think of you as the brightest of her children. And, even though you are only creatures of the imagination, is not the world of the imagination the truest of all the worlds, after all ?

And then the legends of the countryside! What county in the land can match them? It is here, perhaps, that one is apt to find the work of the historian a little distracting; it leaves you too few illusions. Old stories grow up around the country lanes, and are repeated from nurse to children; they become part of the heritage of the native; one likes them left unrifled by discovery. But when historical research comes along, it rules out the old map into squares, and sweeps away the landmarks of fancy. It serves, of course, the sacred cause of accuracy; but as one roams from Wells to Athelney, who wants to be too accurate? Not I, at any rate; I love to fill my imagination, and the imaginations of my boys who will follow me on the old trails, with all the sweet, impossible lore of the countryside. For us Joseph of Arimathea shall return perpetually to the abbey by the marsh, with the Holy Grail and the sacred thorn in charge; for us the grave of Arthur shall remain a place of pious pilgrimage, so long as the feet will carry us and the eyes lift themselves up to the Mendip Hills. "Hic jacet sepultus inclytus rex Arturus in insula Avalonia," and here we will still reverence his legend without questioning too carefully whether Queen's Camel were really Camelot.

And there are other stories, too, probably entirely built of fancy. When I was a little boy, I was told how all the valley round Shapwick was once the summer sea, and how the waters came up right to the foot of Glastonbury Abbey. And the story further ran that here it was that the dusky barge came up, "Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern," and carried Arthur,

with his three Queens, into the confines of the spiritual city. And, further, I was assured that Sir Bedivere climbed the face of Glastonbury Tor itself, to see the last of the spectral vessel, "straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand," until the vision was lost in the light. The story is, of course, all apocryphal; doubtless it is demonstrably false. Yet for one believer no later knowledge can sweep away the childish impression; and I shall never see Glastonbury Tor lifting above the sunlight and shadow without a thought of Bedivere and Arthur; and of the eventual passage awaiting every soul—"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

And is not this typical of so much of the early associations of childhood, the secret of those "first affections, those shadowy recollections," which, however deeply the plough of anxious years may drive the furrow through our hearts,

> "Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal Silence."

These, after all, are the real things of life; not the counting-house, the printing-press, the pen and ink and paper of a grinding Duty; but the imaginings with which we set out upon the day's journey; the light that never was except in dreamland; the voices that never spoke but to the ear of the soul. And is not this the reason that the old homeward way always finds every one of us a child again? What is it but this longing to revive the heart of childhood that leads our feet so often to the old, familiar hills?

" Hame, hame, hame, O hame fain would I be—
O hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree ! "

It is not only, of course, that the trees are greener, and the winding roads whiter among the fields of home. The Roman colonist, when he left his father's house, used to take with him some of the glowing coals from the hearth, and set them down alight on the new hearthstone in the new home. It was a beautiful idea, and all of us would choose to do the same ; but it does not conclude the whole matter. Some of the home-spirit may travel with us across the sea, but the better part of it remains inseparable from its birth-place. It was here that we were young ; here that we first hoped ; here that we first loved. And when youth, and hope, and love are all at an end, it is here that we would choose to rest, returning, like the hunted stag, to the spot where we were roused, and losing all remembrance in the land which memory has always kept unspoiled and unspotted from the world.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE

THOSE readers, whose "classical education" began any time between fifty and thirty years ago, will not need to be reminded of a certain green Latin exercise-book which started business with the pregnant sentence, "Balbus murum aedificabat"—"Balbus was building a wall."

So far as my own recollection serves, this sentence marked the first turning-point at which Latin grammar emerged out of a chaos of technicalties into the borders of common-sense. History began, for the grammarian, when Balbus was building a wall. The matter was of little interest in those days, when the correct terminations of the imperfect tense and of the accusative case were the whole concern of boyhood; but in the years which have passed since then—the years which are supposed to have brought the philosophic mind—I have often wondered if that grammarian was not worthy of as high a funeral as Browning's, in that his wisdom saw into the very heart of things, and began his dry record with the primitive fact.

"Balbus was building a wall"—is it not the first duty of man? To dig, to build, to hunt: that is to say, to provide a home and then to provision it. The primitive life of man, the natural life, makes no further demand upon the head of the family. To-day we have complicated these healthy duties by a cloud of elaborations. We begin our day's work by rushing along mean little, huddled thoroughfares; we project our

panting bodies into iron cages by which we are lowered into the bowels of the earth; we are whirled for half an hour through an iron tube; again we are sent spinning upward in a cage. We emerge between high walls without a yard of sky above us, and toil at a dusty desk with a flaring light in our eyes till the patch of grey sky above us has become black; then the process begins again, and lands us back in our mean little streets, in time to go wearily to bed, in the hope of finding spirit enough in a night's rest to start us out on the same career next morning.

Well, it is not a cheerful picture; and it is scarcely a wonder that the mind of the idealist should have been at work to better it. An Englishman's home, says the old adage, is his castle. Our favourite national ballad reminds us that humility is no bar to the delights of home, sweet home. Yet, when you come to think of it, what melancholy little hovels so many of us town-faring toilers labour all our life to keep above our heads, paying other owners extortionate interest for the right of occupying their inconvenient property! Balbus knew a better way than that. "Balbus was building a wall."

I would ask the reader, then, to follow me in imagination into a happier land. When he has reached its borders, he will forget the tedium of these dull, pedestrian phrases, in gratitude for the sunlight and waving trees, the trim gardens and the clean, white cottage homes to which it will introduce him. A home! one's own home! There can still lie immortal music in that word. A little while ago, I, too, followed the law of Balbus, and I write this crabbed manuscript

from between the walls which I have built. There is a familiar wisdom which says that fools build houses, and wise men live in them; but I prefer to believe that, if he chooses the right spot, the wise man lives in the house which he himself has built. After all, the house which you have yourself watched grow, for which you yourself imagined this little oriel or extended this cosy ingle-nook, must, in the nature of things, mean so much more to the fancy than the ready-made article which has never shown you its soul. As the home rises, brick upon brick, from its broad and concrete trenches to its comely rough-cast chimney-stacks, every stick and stone of it has its own association. You even remember upon what day, and under what complexion of sky, each pleasant finishing touch was given. Here is the real sense of possession. However small the tenement, it is at least all yours.

And this happy feeling is now within every man's reach. I look out of my window as I write, across the tulips and the wall-flowers; and away to the north-west, steadily spreading in my direction, I see the fresh white walls and red roofs of the Hampstead Garden Suburb—surely a land of promise undreamt of by the Balbus of half a century ago. It is growing nearer to me every month. The days will not be long, I fear, before the meadow set with willows, behind my little garden, will hear the sound of the bricklayers' trowel. Yet how can I grudge the Garden Suburb its steady growth, since I have myself watched every new house in it from foundation to roof-tree, and walked its ways of pleasantness from spring to mid-winter? I wonder how many of the great

labouring body of Londoners—the black-coated clerks and pale-faced artisans—have any idea of the charming homes which they can now make for themselves, among our green fields and may-trees, within twenty minutes of their daily work! Well, they have only to come out from their wilderness to see.

"It is the morning of the May,
And the spring comes slowly up this way."

Standing by Asmuns Hill, and looking down upon the well-planned winding road, one sees broad ways, flanked with grass, trim gardens with old trees carefully preserved at every corner, high-backed seats in the porches, overhung with roses, where the tired worker may rest with the day's work done, and open spaces for the children to play in, on every side. The gardens are marked off with neat white posts and chains, and every garden is alive with flowers, while over all hangs a broad expanse of blue sky, bringing sunlight and health into every corner of the humblest tenement. What a contrast to the purlieus of the Euston Road! And yet it is only ten minutes' journey away. And behind it all rises the billowy Heath, whose fir-trees stand up black against the autumn sky, or glimmer with green in the light of spring. There is perpetual variety on the Heath, from its broad expanse towards Parliament Hill to its bosky hollows at North End, and even in its loneliest winter guise, it "needs not June for beauty's heightening." Morning, noon, or evening, whatever the hour or season, the quiet places of the Heath are still the shy haunts of romance, where, within a few minutes of leaving the

crowded and noisy mart, one can be free of the world of imagination, and hear the wind sweeping over open spaces, calling the heart of man to dreams and to adventures.

Here, too, comes back to one something of the half-forgotten happiness of boyhood. We who were bred by country pastures, and educated under the shadow of that golden Abbey in the West, must always feel like pilgrims and sojourners in a land of lamp-posts and kerb-stones. But though there are lamp-posts and kerb-stones now along the edge of the Heath, the heart of it is purer "country" than many a rural wayside. All the birds of spring are hiding in the birch-thicket, and there are silver squirrels among the firs. Again, the wraiths of past lovers of the place return in fancy with the twilight. Here stands The Upper Flask, well-loved by Dr. Johnson; here was Constable's cottage; here Keats and Shelley came to visit Leigh Hunt, and "tired the sun with talking, and sent him down the sky." Here, too, were the cosy home of Joanna Baillie, and the saintly refuge of the Angel in the House, while here again Du Maurier's St. Bernard used to break panting through the bracken. The dells of Hampstead are full of ghosts, but they are all ghosts of a kindly countenance. Friendship is the essence of their dream.

Now, if this book should fall into the hands of any reader who, imprisoned in some sunless back-room in a crowded quarter of the town, still feels the stirring of spring in his blood, as the dingy lime-tree opposite begins to break into leaf, let him come to Hampstead and learn for himself the wisdom of making a home.

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Oh, but I have done an unselfish thing in telling him this! For I know he will yearn to be about the business of Balbus, and, as likely as not, he will plant himself upon the meadow with the willows, that looks so spring-like from my book-room door to-day. Nevertheless, one must not repine. My work in this line is done. Balbus has built his wall. It is a plain wall enough, and Mr. Voysey or Mr. Baillie Scott could better it with a pencil-stroke; but at least it encloses a hearth of homely comfort, a hearth that cherishes green thoughts by a green shade. I look out on my little garden plot, where the sundial, that once was Emma Hamilton's, is marking the flitting hours of my passing day.

"Amyddst ye flowers,
I tell ye houres,"

it says. Alas! only a few of our hours may pass among the blossoms, and the sundial cannot mark them all. There are cloud and rain to come, as there have been cloud and rain before. But Balbus has built his wall. The days are gone by, when he could proceed to his next duty, by taking his long-bow, and going forth to shoot a deer upon the Heath. Instead—he has written this article. It will provide the evening meal. And now Balbus shall go out into the sunlight, and mow the grass around the dial.

EXPLICIT

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